



Board Strategic and Operational Plan, FY 2017-2020 FY2019 Update

Section I Strategic Elements

1.1 Board Strategic Vision

A description of the Board's strategic vision to support regional economic growth and economic self-sufficiency. The description must include:

- a. goals for preparing an educated and skilled workforce, including youth and individuals with barriers to employment; and*
- b. goals relating to the performance accountability measures based on performance indicators described in WIOA §116(b)(2)(A).*

The mission of the Workforce Solutions of West Central Texas Board ("the Board") is, "Providing resources for good jobs, strong employers, and a healthy regional economy". In West Central, economic development involves participating in broader community initiatives to promote an educated and skilled workforce to meet the needs of employers. While the Board views as its responsibility the effective operation of program and frontline services, the maintenance of this task is left largely to the staff of the Board. Board members regard their role as that of more extensively impacting the economic well-being of West Central Texas. Employers are seen as the primary customer of the workforce system and the Board is the lead in working with business, economic development, and education partners. The Board utilizes two committees to accomplish its initiatives. The committees are comprised largely of Board members, but also include Board staff as well as applicable representation from subrecipient staff (other non-Board members may be engaged as needed for their requisite expertise). The committees are tasked with developing and executing action plans for the accomplishment of the Board's current two overall goals.

Board Goals

Board members participated in a planning session on June 28, 2017 and identified three goals: 1) identify and facilitate resources for employers, 2) identify and facilitate resources for employees, and 3) identify and facilitate resources for communities. After discussion at the June 28 Board meeting, it was agreed that further refinement was necessary by a smaller group of Board members. Volunteers were solicited to participate in the discussion and that group met on July 27th. The resulting board goals were defined, as outlined below.

Note: The abbreviations listed in the last column of each of the tables represent the WIOA performance indicators as follows:

- EmpQ2 = Employed Q2 Post-Exit
- EmpQ4 = Employed Q4 Post-Exit
- MedEarnQ2 = Median Earnings Q2 Post-Exit
- CR = Credential Rate
- MSG = Measurable Skills Gain
- ESE = Effectiveness in Serving Employers
- Emp/Ed Q2 = Youth Employed/in Education Q2 Post-Exit
- Emp/Ed Q4 = Youth Employed/in Education Q4 Post-Exit

GOAL #1— INCREASE PARTICIPATION OF EMPLOYERS WITH WORKFORCE SYSTEM BY 5%.

The Employer Engagement Committee is tasked with increasing employer participation with the workforce system by 5% annually over the contracted performance target for the number of employers using workforce system services each year for the next three years beginning September 1, 2017. The focus is on developing a toolkit of materials and resources to better engage new and retain current employers utilizing workforce services.

Table 1.1

| Goal One: Increase the number of employers utilizing WIT Assigned Committee: Employer Engagement | | | |
|--|--|---|--|
| Strategies | Planned Activities | Accomplishments | Correlation to Performance |
| Create a strategy for board members to reach out to businesses that have not engaged with workforce services | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Subrecipient staff will create a list of employers they have not been able to work with; the list will be maintained using a method that is accessible by committee members. 2. Board members will be trained to access the list. 3. Members will be provided a list of talking points for use with employer contacts. 4. Members will reach out to employers and report progress to the committee | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Spreadsheet with a list of employers has been built. This spreadsheet will be updated on a quarterly basis for review by board members to help identify possible business contacts. 2. No decision has been made on which venue will be utilized or how board members will be trained on access. 3. The talking points list has been developed and will be submitted to the committee for acceptance and distribution to other board members. 4. In progress. | Informing employers about WIT and encouraging their use of workforce services in general supports performance measures related to employer services and to job seeker employment. WIOA measures supported by this goal include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • EmpQ2 • EmpQ4 • MedEarnQ2 • ESE • Emp/Ed Q2 • Emp/Ed Q4 |
| Identify toolkit resources to engage employers | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Videos: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Identify potential content, length, and number of videos | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. a. Identified the following content/length for 4 videos: | |

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| | <p>b. Identify/procure entity to create the videos c. Create the videos</p> <p>2. Identify higher quality items that can be given to employers utilizing workforce services & used as "referral program" materials (employers referring another employer)</p> <p>3. Purchase a social media platform for more effective marketing.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Overview Video – general overview of services (est. 3-minutes) • Training/Skills Development Grant Funds (30-60 seconds) • Hiring Events/Job Fairs (30-60 seconds) • Job Services (30-60 seconds) <p>b. An entity was procured to film and create the videos.</p> <p>c. The videos were completed and presented at the February 20, 2019 board meeting. They have been uploaded to social media platforms for board members and workforce subrecipient staff who work with employers.</p> <p>2. Tabled at this time.</p> <p>3. A social media administrative platform was purchased in the Fall to more effectively manage workforce accounts and pages across multiple networks. Employer marketing including the videos will be delivered via these platforms, as well as in an album on our Vimeo channel and on the workforce website.</p> | |
| Develop a plan of action for using the toolkit | The planned activities for this strategy have not yet been fully developed. | | |

GOAL #2-- INCREASE THE NUMBER OF JOB SEEKERS IN THE REGION IN WIT WHO ARE NOT REQUIRED TO REGISTER.

The Workforce Engagement Committee was created for the purpose of developing and implementing strategies to increase the pool of WorkInTexas (WIT) registrants. The committee is particularly focused on increasing the usage of WIT by individuals who are *nonmandatory. Members removed consideration of mandatory counts due to their unpredictability (a downturn in the economy could result in an upsurge in claimants).

*Note: For purposes of this goal, “nonmandatory” refers to those individuals active in WIT who are not currently receiving UI, regardless of the reason they initially registered.

Table 1.2

| Goal Two: Increase the number of nonmandatory job seekers in WIT | | | |
|---|--|---|---|
| Assigned Committee: Workforce Engagement | | | |
| Strategies | Planned Activities | Accomplishments | Correlation to Performance |
| Create a VISTA position to conduct outreach to increase WIT registrations | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Coordinate with *AHEC to fill a 1-year VISTA position 2. Assign VISTA to: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Create and deliver outreach campaigns to targeted groups b. Develop and share toolkits that promote usage of workforce resources for educators, individuals and other entities working with targeted populations c. Enhance and support social media campaigns and other forms of electronic communication to reach targeted populations | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The position is currently being advertised; recruitment is ongoing. <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Developed an MOU for interagency coordination with AHEC b. Created a job description for the VISTA position 2. VISTA assignment is pending the position being filled. <p>UPDATE: At the February 20, 2019 committee meeting, members decided to alter this strategy due to months of unsuccessful recruitment for the VISTA position. Staff is currently restructuring the position to hire a summer intern.</p> | <p>Informing job seekers about WIT and encouraging their use of workforce services supports performance measures related to jobseeker upskilling and employment. WIOA measures supported by this goal include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • EmpQ2 • EmpQ4 • MedEarnQ2 • CR • MSG • Emp/Ed Q2 • Emp/Ed Q4 |
| Engage social media to increase awareness of WIT and its employment opportunities | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Research prices/approaches to create a social media campaign 2. Determine best approach and implement the campaign | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1./2. Social media packages were presented at the August 2018 meeting and one was selected. | |

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| | 3. Collect analytics to determine outcomes | 3. The social media campaign ran 9/15/18-12/31/18. Analytics showed a slight positive impact, however more time is needed to gather more data. | |
| Utilize public bus wraps to advertise the benefits of WIT registrations | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Research prices/scope of area public transportation 2. Select the most efficient systems/routes for delivering the message 3. Create logos 4. Purchase the wraps | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1./2. Area bus service advertising information was presented at the August 2018 meeting, and one was selected. 3. Logos were developed and one was selected for use on two buses. 4. Space on the buses was purchased and wraps were in place effective 1/28/19. Staff is providing data at committee meetings to inform members about the counties the buses travel to and the number of trips they make. | |

*Note: AHEC is the Area Health Education Center for West Central Texas, and is the area member agency for the Americorps VISTA program.

1.2 Aligning Efforts Among Partners

A description of the Board’s strategy to work with the entities carrying out the core programs and with the required partners to align resources available to the local area to achieve the vision and goals.

The Board contracts with a subrecipient entity, CECT, to operate the workforce center system, through which core and other program services are provided, including: WIOA Adult, Dislocated Worker, and Youth Programs; Wagner-Peyser Employment Services Program, services to Unemployment Insurance recipients, TAA, TANF/Choices Program, SNAP E&T Program, and Choices Noncustodial Parent Program. The service delivery system consists of one full-service workforce center in Abilene and three branch offices in Brownwood, Sweetwater and Snyder. The Abilene Workforce Center serves as the hub for the region and, in addition to workforce services, houses staff from the Texas Veterans Commission (TVC), and the Texas Veterans Leadership Program. Staff from Texas Workforce Solutions – Vocational Rehabilitation Services (TWSVRS), and Job Corps also have a regular presence in the center. In addition, workforce staff have an itinerant presence at the adult education location in Abilene.

The workforce subrecipient has primary responsibility for job seeker and employer services. The Board does not directly provide services to job seekers, but does provide oversight of those activities in the form of contract management, monitoring, and policy maintenance. With regard to serving employers, the Board’s model identifies the subrecipient’s role as employer services and the Board’s role as business services. Workforce Center staff involved in serving employers focus on those services related to hiring, assessment, job matching, job referral, job requirements, job postings and assistance related to immediate needs of the business such as prevailing wage rates and screening. The Board’s business service function encompasses industry sectors, economic development, labor market trends, and

projected skill needs. The Board's Business Development Consultant meets regularly with Workforce Center employer service staff to discuss any issues identified as a result of Board interaction with employers and to provide information on emerging issues, events and activities resulting from the Board's interaction with economic development, business associations, businesses, and/or other community agencies and leaders. These meetings also incorporate a degree of accountability to ensure the Workforce Center employer service staff is meeting the needs of local employers.

Alignment of core programs and activities with the overall West Central Texas community is achieved through Board coordination with industry sector, economic development, and community service partners such as (this list is not all-inclusive): Abilene Adult Education, Central Texas Opportunities, Abilene Housing Authority, Baird Housing Authority, Big Country Housing Association, Betty Hardwick Center, Central Texas MHMR, 2-1-1 A Call for Help Advisory Committee, Abilene ISD – HeadStart/Early Childhood, BCFS (serves foster youth), Serenity House (assists individuals with substance abuse), West Texas Economic Development District, Regional Coordinated Transportation Planning Committee, United Way, and several area chambers of commerce. In addition, the Board actively participates in workshops, events and conferences with the Texas Midwest Community Network, a regional organization focused on providing support and networking opportunities for individuals engaged in economic development or chamber of commerce activities as staff or board members. Participation in these entities provides a method to inform Board subrecipients regarding local service initiatives; helps to ensure, to the extent possible, that internal services are not duplicative of those provided by other organizations; and enables the Board to align its service strategies with those of partner entities.

1.3 Regional Economic Analysis

A regional analysis of the following:

- a. The economic conditions, including existing and emerging in-demand industry sectors and occupations, as well as targeted occupations*
- b. The employment needs of employers in existing and emerging in-demand industry sectors and occupations*

Through the work of the Board's committees, engagement with industry and economic development entities, and utilization of intelligence produced by various entities, the Board maintains a constant awareness of regional economic conditions. The following analysis was constructed from a combination of those resources.

Regional Economic Conditions

Data in this section have been amended to reflect current economic conditions as of the update of this plan. In general, West Central has experienced a period of growth, which is expected to continue according to labor market data. As is noted in updated tables 1.5 - 1.8, on both an occupational level and industry scale, job projections have increased exponentially:

- Most industries have, at a minimum, doubled employment needs projections, with many increased by several hundred or 1000+.
- In 10-year total job projections for all occupations that were previously on the demand list, most have increased by two to three times the original plan estimates.
- All occupations that were previously on the list have increased projections in average annual demand, and most have had modest increases in average wages.

Other economic indicators reflect a growth period for the economy as well. Based on the most current labor market data available (November 2018) as of the writing of this plan update, since January 2017:

- The labor force has grown by 2%.
- The number employed has grown by 3.5%.
- The number unemployed has decreased by 29%.
- The unemployment rate has decreased from a high of 4.5% in January 2017 to a low of 3.1% in November 2018. It has remained below 4% since January 2018, and below 3.5% since September 2018.

One other item to note is the changing dynamic among area educators and training providers. While Cisco College and Texas State Technical College (TSTC) have expanded program offerings (and TSTC has built an additional facility), three of the five area universities (Abilene Christian University, Hardin-Simmons University, and Howard Payne University) have experienced both downsizing of staff and reductions in program offerings. One of the reasons offered for the scale back is a reduction in external funds. However, according to a December 6, 2018 article in The Texas Monitor, [“Small Private Colleges are Shrinking and Struggling”](#), “The cause of the distress is a combination of a reduced college-age population and a realization that — in an age when inventing a career via technology is much easier than it was just 10 years ago — a college degree is not as necessary as once thought.” Another indication of the declining popularity of baccalaureate programs is the creation of shorter training programs that result in teacher certifications. One such program is the “2 + 1 Teacher Training Program” developed by Texas Tech University that will allow individuals with an associate’s degree to transition to a bachelor’s degree and attain TEA teacher certification in one year at locations within our region. This program is currently offered in collaboration with Snyder ISD, with plans to expand into at least two more ISDs.

This workforce development area consists of 19 counties covering 17,000+ square miles with a labor force of 143,046, and encompasses 8708 employers*. (*Note: This is the number of employer reporting units registered with Texas Workforce Commission in this area.) As of 2018 Quarter 3, total employment for the West Central WDA was 141,544 (based on a four-quarter moving average). From Q3 of 2017 to Q3 of 2018, employment increased 3.6% in the region. The average worker in West Central earned annual wages of \$40,100 as of 2018 Q3. Average annual wages per worker increased 5.5% over the preceding four quarters. The six largest industries (in terms of numbers of employees) are: Healthcare, Retail, Education, Hospitality, Manufacturing, and Construction. When this expansive region is subdivided, it becomes clearer where certain industries are dominant, and that two additional industries (agriculture and mining) play a key role in particular areas. In the northern and eastern counties the top two industries are Agriculture and Healthcare, while in the southern counties it is Healthcare followed by Manufacturing. In the centrally located counties Healthcare is followed by Retail, while Mining dominates the western counties followed equally by Retail and Healthcare. The industries with the highest location quotients overall for this region are Mining, Agriculture, and Utilities. Data from the Chmura* Economics & Analytics database projects growth of 910 jobs in the Mining industry over the next 10 years, with a sizeable replacement demand of 6236 workers. In fact, economic analysis from Chmura indicates that over the next 10 years, employment in this region “is projected to expand by 6,061 jobs. The fastest growing sector in the region is expected to be Utilities with a +2.0% year-over-year rate of growth. The strongest forecast by number of jobs over this period is expected for Health Care and Social Assistance (+3,847 jobs), Mining, Quarrying, and Oil and Gas Extraction (+910), and Construction (+747).” The combined 10-year replacement demand for jobs in these three industries tops out at 39,147.

Regionally there continues to be expansion in construction and economic development that requires skills already in shortage. For example, there has been growth in new and expanding wind farms. In addition, plans for power plants have been confirmed, as well as continued pipeline and manufacturing

infrastructure projects requiring a large number of skilled workers. Once these projects are completed there will be a continued need of specialized skills to maintain them and the community growth they will generate.

The skill sets represented by the industries and occupations in demand fall largely into the STEM (science, technology, engineering, math) areas. The Board has long recognized a growing need for workers that have knowledge and skills in these subjects. In order to address these skill shortages, as well as other market issues, the Board is engaging leaders in the healthcare and manufacturing sectors to launch industry partnerships. Inaugural meetings are scheduled for the latter part of January 2017. Additional Board initiatives that address these skill gaps are discussed in several other sections of this plan. Note: Updated information on these industry sector partnerships is located in section 4.1.1.

Abilene is the largest city in this region, with a population (122,612) over six times that of the next largest city, and is home to over 30 businesses¹ that employ 100 or more workers, including the following industries: military, education, healthcare, government, manufacturing, energy, engineering, telecommunications, aviation, and banking. The following analysis was obtained from Chmura, and examines Taylor County (roughly 91% of the county population lives in Abilene). “The largest sector in Taylor County, Texas is Health Care and Social Assistance, employing 12,591 workers. The next-largest sectors in the region are Retail Trade (8,153 workers) and Accommodation and Food Services (7,057). The sectors with the largest LQs in the region are Mining, Quarrying, and Oil and Gas Extraction (LQ = 4.12), Utilities (1.41), and Health Care and Social Assistance (1.31). Over the next 10 years, employment in Taylor County, Texas is projected to expand by 4,578 jobs. The fastest growing sector in the region is expected to be Mining, Quarrying, and Oil and Gas Extraction with a +1.8% year-over-year rate of growth. The strongest forecast by number of jobs over this period is expected for Health Care and Social Assistance (+2,408 jobs), Administrative and Support and Waste Management and Remediation Services (+465), and Educational Services (+434).”

¹Note: Information obtained from <http://developabilene.com/community-profile>.

*Note: Chmura uses the QCEW as its source and, as of the update of this report, its data were updated through 2018Q1 with preliminary estimates updated to 2018Q3

The following table provides the list of in-demand industry sectors and occupations, as well as targeted occupations.

Table 1.4 (revised for FY19 plan update)

| In-Demand Industries | In-Demand Occupations | Targeted Occupations |
|---|---|---|
| 2111-Oil and Gas Extraction | 51-2011 – Aircraft Structure, Surfaces, Rigging, and Systems Assemblers | 51-2011 – Aircraft Structure, Surfaces, Rigging, and Systems Assemblers |
| 2131-Support Activities for Mining | 49-3023 – Automotive Service Tech. | 49-3023 – Automotive Service Tech. |
| 2211-Power Generation and Supply | 49-3031 – Bus/Truck Mech./Diesel Spec. | 49-3031 – Bus/Truck Mech./Diesel Spec. |
| 2362-Nonresidential Building and Construction | 47-3012 – Carpenter Helper | 49-9051 – Electrical Power-Line Installers and Repairers |
| 2371-Utility System Construction | 47-2061 – Construction Laborers | 17-3024 – Electro-Mechanical Technicians (proxy for Drone Pilots) |
| 2373-Highway, Street, and Bridge Construction | 47-3019 – Construction Trades Helper, All Other | 29-2041 – Emergency Medical Technicians & Paramedics |

| | | |
|---|--|--|
| 2382-Building Equipment Contractors | 49-9051 – Electrical Power-Line Installers and Repairers | 50-1011 – First-Line Supervisors of Production and Operating Workers |
| 3111-Animal Food Manufacturing | 47-3013 – Electrician Helper | 49-9021 – Heating AC and Refrigeration Mechanics and Installers |
| 3323-Architectural and Structural Metals | 17-3024 – Electro-Mechanical Technicians (proxy for Drone Pilots) | 49-9041 – Industrial Machinery Mechanics |
| 3327-Machine Shops and Threaded Products | 25-2021 – Elementary School Teachers, Except Special Education | 50-9061 – Inspectors, Testers, Sorters, Samplers, and Weighers |
| 3331-Ag., Construction, and Mining Machinery | 29-2041 – Emergency Medical Technicians & Paramedics | 29-2061 – LVNs |
| 3336-Turbine and Power Transmission Equipment | 50-1011 – First-Line Supervisors of Production and Operating Workers | 49-9071 – Maintenance/Repair Workers, General |
| 4841-General Freight Trucking | 49-9021 – Heating AC and Refrigeration Mechanics and Installers | 31-9092 – Medical Assistants |
| 4842-Specialized Freight Trucking | 49-9041 – Industrial Machinery Mechanics | 31-1014 – Nursing Aides, Orderlies/Attendants |
| 6111-Elementary and Secondary Schools | 50-9061 – Inspectors, Testers, Sorters, Samplers, and Weighers | 29-1141 – Registered Nurses |
| 6211-Offices of Physicians | 29-2061 – LVNs | 47-2231 – Solar Photovoltaic Installers |
| 6221-General Medical and Surgical Hospitals | 49-9071 – Maintenance/Repair Workers, General | 53-3032 – Truck Drivers |
| 8111-Automotive Repair and Maintenance | 31-9092 – Medical Assistants | 51-4121 – Welders/Cutters |
| 9299-State Government | 31-1014 – Nursing Aides, Orderlies/Attendants | 49-9081 – Wind Turbine Service Technicians |
| 9399-Local Government | 25-2022 – Middle School Teachers, Except Special and Career/Technical Education | |
| | 47-3014 – Painters, Paperhangers, Plasterers, and Stucco Masons Helpers | |
| | 47-3015 – Pipelayers, Plumbers, Pipefitters, and Steamfitters Helpers | |
| | 29-1141 – Registered Nurses | |
| | 25-2031 – Secondary School Teachers, Except Special and Career/Technical Education | |
| | 47-2231 – Solar Photovoltaic Installers | |
| | 53-3032 – Truck Drivers | |
| | 51-4121 – Welders/Cutters | |
| | 49-9081 – Wind Turbine Service Technicians | |

The occupations highlighted in red have been removed, and the ones highlighted in green have been added. The Nurse Aide occupation was removed prior to this plan update; the Solar Photovoltaic Installer occupation is being removed concurrent with this plan update. All of the occupations highlighted in green were added prior to the plan update and will soon have training programs developed by at least one area provider. The three industries highlighted in red are being removed concurrent with this plan update.

UNMANNED AERIAL VEHICLE/DRONE PILOT:

Although an SOC code does not yet technically exist for the drone pilot occupation (the closest one is for Electro-Mechanical Technicians, 17-3024; the Board is using that as a proxy) it has applicability in no less than four industries in West Central. While the use of drones for surveillance is not a new practice, drones

are now being specially designed to collect and transmit technical data particular to the agriculture, security/law enforcement, construction, and fracking industries.

In agriculture, drones have far surpassed simply observing acres of crops more efficiently than humans on the ground. They now have the capability to conduct soil analysis, evaluate each stage of crop lifecycle, use sensors to determine which parts of a field lack moisture, and assess crop health by spotting bacterial growth. Drones are now also capable of more efficient crop spraying by maintaining appropriate distances and instantly adjusting the amount of chemicals used for safer and “greener” crop maintenance.

In security/law enforcement, drone design is progressing to allow longer surveillance times for remote use. In addition, monitoring equipment is advancing to provide better quality video and pictures. Technology is currently being developed to include motion sensing and behavior feedback. All of this equates to increased drone usage for expanded security monitoring, better analysis of accident situations, and advanced analysis of locations to determine security risks.

In construction, drone use is advancing in the area of site inspections. According to an article from Drone Powered Solutions, Clarity from Above, May 2016, the efficiency of using of drones in wind energy construction was described as follows. “Of course, some inspections are required by law to be performed by certified personnel, but in many cases they can be performed by drones. To illustrate: a standard wind turbine inspection currently costs around \$1,500 per tower; performing the same inspection using a drone cuts the cost by around 50%.”

Finally, in oil and gas extraction, specifically fracking, a growing requirement to more effectively monitor the emission of methane is leading to the use of drones. In an article titled, GE Made an Oilfield Drone that can Sniff Out Gas Leaks, 10/9/16, on engadget.com, the efficiency of drones over human inspectors is explained as follows. “At the opening of GE's new oil and gas R&D center in Oklahoma, the multi-business company has also presented its new methane-sniffing helicopter drone called "Raven."... According to the company, the drone can make gas inspections go three times faster. The Environmental Protection Agency requires oil producers to monitor their fields for leaks, you see. And currently, what they do is send workers armed with infrared cameras to walk around their wells. Raven, with its laser-based sensors, can fly over the field for 40 minutes on a single charge and beam back data to an iPad on the ground. Even better, it can tell how bad the leak is, whereas the infrared camera can only detect its presence, not its severity. The drone is also loaded with custom software that allows it to plan its own flight and analyze the data it gathers.”

Update:

Demand for Solar Photovoltaic Installers has not grown as initially anticipated. Solar energy farms have not developed in the quantity required to create demand for this occupation, therefore it is being removed from the list. However, the Board has continued to see interest in Drone Pilots increase as their use in various area industries is further cultivated. In addition, the Board is aware of numerous upcoming construction projects in the nonresidential building sector and in the highway, street, and bridge sector—thus the reason for adding several construction-related occupations. Some of these projects include several new school buildings for Abilene ISD, a facility expansion for Funeral Directors Life Insurance, and a big dorm renovation at Dyess AFB. The City of Abilene is in the process of a city-wide street improvement project and TXDOT has many current and planned highway and bridge improvement projects across the 19 counties. One confirmed new wind farm will be constructed in counties north of Abilene. At least one is expanding, and another wind farm company is showing interest in the western counties.

The animal food manufacturing industry (NAICS 3111) is an emerging sector due to the opening of two new facilities. Prairie Dog Pet Products is in the process of opening in Abilene and will hire a total of approximately 500 employees. Lortscher Animal Nutrition, Inc. recently opened in Brownwood and will hire a total of approximately 125 employees. Update: Despite lower project employment numbers, the Board has determined to keep this industry on the in-demand list due to awareness of 2 new facilities potentially coming to the area.

Regional Employment Needs

The needs of employers in the in-demand industry sectors are provided in the matrix below. While each industry employs a wide variety of occupations, this analysis looks at the jobs that will have up to the four highest employment needs* (the sum total of growth and replacement needs) over the next 10 years. (*Note: These figures will not match numbers provided for the same occupations in other places/spreadsheets throughout this plan due to the timing with which each data set was obtained, and because these occupation numbers are specific to the demand of these particular industries. In addition, while an occupation may represent a particular need for a specific industry, it is not necessarily a demand occupation for the region.) Data for these matrices was obtained from Chmura.

Table 1.5 (revised for FY19 plan update)

| In-Demand Industry Sector | Highest Need Occupations | Projected Employment Needs |
|--|--|----------------------------|
| 2111-Oil and Gas Extraction | 47-5013 - Service Unit Operators, Oil, Gas, and Mining | 105 |
| | 23-2093 - Title Examiners, Abstractors, and Searchers | 97 |
| 2131-Support Activities for Mining | 47-5071 – Roustabouts | 836 |
| | 47-5013 – Service Unit Operators | 630 |
| | 53-3032 – Truck Drivers | 346 |
| | 47-5081 - Helpers--Extraction Workers | 308 |
| 2211-Power Generation and Supply* | 49-9081 - Wind Turbine Service Technicians | 332 |
| | 49-9051 – Electrical Power Line Installers and Repairers | 90 |
| | 51-8013 – Power Plant Operators | 79 |
| 2362-Nonresidential Building and Construction* | 47-2061 – Construction Laborers | 101 |
| | 47-1011 - First-line Supervisors of Construction Trades and Extraction Workers | 88 |
| 2371-Utility System Construction* | 47-2061 – Construction Laborers | 159 |
| | 47-2073 – Operating Engineers | 93 |
| | 47-1011 - First-line Supervisors of Construction Trades and Extraction Workers | 56 |
| 2373-Highway, Street, and Bridge Construction* | 47-2061 – Construction Laborers | 376 |
| | 47-2073 – Operating Engineers | 231 |
| | 53-3032 – Truck Drivers | 153 |
| | 47-1011 - First-line Supervisors of Construction Trades and Extraction Workers | 124 |
| 2382-Building Equipment Contractors | 47-2111 – Electricians | 769 |
| | 47-2152 – Plumbers, Pipefitters, and Steamfitters | 479 |
| | 49-9021 – Heating Air Conditioning, and Refrigeration Mechanics and Installers | 237 |
| | 43-9061 - Office Clerks, General | 133 |
| 3111-Animal Food Manufacturing | 51-9023 - Mixing and Blending Machine Setters, Operators, and Tenders | 39 |
| 3323-Architectural and Structural Metals* | 51-4121 – Welders, Cutters, Solderers, and Brazers | 176 |
| | 51-2041 - Structural Metal Fabricators and Fitters | 58 |

| | | |
|---|--|------|
| | 51-9198 - Helpers--Production Workers | 58 |
| 4841-General Freight Trucking* | 53-3032 – Truck Drivers | 714 |
| | 53-7062 - Laborers and Freight, Stock, and Material Movers, Hand | 69 |
| | 49-3031 - Bus and Truck Mechanics and Diesel Engine Specialists | 38 |
| 4842-Specialized Freight Trucking* | 53-3032 – Truck Drivers | 68 |
| 6111-Elementary and Secondary Schools | 25-2021 – Elementary School Teachers, Except Special Ed. | 1186 |
| | 25-9041 – Teacher Assistants | 1129 |
| | 25-2031 – Secondary School Teachers, Except Special and Career/Technical Education | 1011 |
| | 25-3098 - Substitute Teachers | 1003 |
| 6211-Offices of Physicians | 31-9092 – Medical Assistants | 425 |
| | 43-6013 - Medical Secretaries | 342 |
| | 43-4171 – Receptionists and Information Clerks | 239 |
| | 29-1141 – Registered Nurses | 119 |
| 6221-General Medical and Surgical Hospitals | 29-1141 – Registered Nurses | 973 |
| | 31-1014 – Nursing Aides, Orderlies/Attendants | 525 |
| | 43-6013 - Medical Secretaries | 303 |
| | 37-2012 - Maids and Housekeeping Cleaners | 194 |
| 8111-Automotive Repair and Maintenance | 49-3023 – Automotive Service Technicians and Mechanics | 290 |
| | 53-7061 – Cleaners of Vehicles and Equipment | 276 |
| | 49-3021 - Automotive Body and Related Repairers | 126 |
| 9299-State Government | Unavailable ¹ | N/A |
| 9399-Local Government | Unavailable ² | N/A |

Data obtained from Chmura Industry-Occupation Mix Spreadsheets run on 12/28/18.

*Note: Based on Board knowledge of possible upcoming activity in these sectors, the employment numbers listed for these industries under-represent the potential need.

1—Note: Although there is no data available for this industry in the LMCI, this sector represents a significant number of employment opportunities in correctional facilities, and regional state agency offices.

2—Note: Although there is no data available for this industry in the LMCI, this sector represents significant employment opportunities in law enforcement, heavy equipment operation, and maintenance.

In addition to the updated employment needs, the other significant change to Table 1.5 is the removal of three industries: ‘3327 – Machine Shops and Threaded Products’, ‘3331 – Ag., Construction, and Mining Machinery’, and ‘3336 – Turbine and Power Transmission Equipment’.

The following matrix provides the updated employment needs (the sum of growth and replacement) for each of the demand occupations for the next 10 years. These figures represent employment across industries.

Table 1.6 (revised for FY19 plan update)

| In-Demand Occupations | Projected Employment Needs |
|---|----------------------------|
| 51-2011 – Aircraft Structure, Surfaces, Rigging, and Systems Assemblers | 16 |
| 49-3023 – Automotive Service Tech. | 760 |
| 49-3031 – Bus/Truck Mech./Diesel Spec. | 309 |
| 47-3012 – Carpenter Helpers | 46 |
| 47-2061 – Construction Laborers | 1794 |
| 47-3019 – Construction Trades Helpers, All Other | 58 |
| 49-9051 – Electrical Power-Line Installers and Repairers | 155 |

| In-Demand Occupations | Projected Employment Needs |
|--|----------------------------|
| 47-3013 – Electrician Helpers | 137 |
| 17-3024 – Electro-Mechanical Technicians (proxy for Drone Pilots) | ** |
| 25-2021 – Elementary School Teachers, Except Special Education | 1215 |
| 29-2041 – Emergency Medical Technicians & Paramedics | 279 |
| 51-1011 – First-Line Supervisors of Production and Operating Workers | 487 |
| 49-9021 – Heating AC and Refrigeration Mechanics and Installers | 310 |
| 49-9041 – Industrial Machinery Mechanics | 375 |
| 51-9061 – Inspectors, Testers, Sorters, Samplers, and Weighers | 402 |
| 29-2061 – LVNs | 1190 |
| 49-9071 – Maintenance/Repair Workers, General | 1297 |
| 31-9092 – Medical Assistants | 745 |
| 25-2022 – Middle School Teachers, Except Special and Career/Technical Education | 579 |
| 47-3014 – Painters, Paperhangers, Plasterers, and Stucco Masons Helpers | 9 |
| 47-3015 – Pipelayers, Plumbers, Pipefitters, and Steamfitters Helpers | 147 |
| 29-1141 – Registered Nurses | 2108 |
| 25-2031 – Secondary School Teachers, Except Special and Career/Technical Education | 1040 |
| 53-3032 – Truck Drivers | 2572 |
| 51-4121 – Welders/Cutters | 759 |
| 49-9081 – Wind Turbine Service Technicians | 348 |

Data obtained from Chmura Snapshot report run on 12/28/18.

**Note: This occupation does not have a true SOC code, consequently the need cannot be accurately represented. However the Board has knowledge of regional interest in this occupation in several industry sectors.

Table 1.6 includes the following changes to the In-Demand Occupations List:

- Removed these occupations:
 - 31-1014 Nursing Aides
 - 47-2231 Solar Photovoltaic Installers
- Added these occupations:
 - 51-2011 Aircraft Structure, Surfaces, Rigging, and Systems Assemblers
 - 25-2021 Elementary School Teachers, Except Special Education
 - 25-2022 Middle School Teachers, Except Special and Career/Technical Education
 - 25-2031 Secondary School Teachers, Except Special and Career/Technical Education
 - 47-3012 Helpers—Carpenters
 - 47-3013 Helpers--Electricians
 - 47-3014 Helpers--Painters, Paperhangers, Plasterers, and Stucco Masons
 - 47-3015 Helpers--Pipelayers, Plumbers, Pipefitters, and Steamfitters
 - 47-3019 Helpers, Construction Trades, All Other
 - 51-1011 First-Line Supervisors of Production and Operating Workers
 - 51-9061 Inspectors, Testers, Sorters, Samplers, and Weighers

1.4 In-Demand Industry Sectors and Occupations

A list of the in-demand industry sectors and occupations.

The Board has identified the occupations in Table 1.7 as having or projected to have a significant impact on the regional economy. Included in the table is additional information regarding the associated in-

demand industry sectors, location quotient, average wages, number of ads/postings as obtained from two different databases, and projected average annual demand for 2018-2028 (obtained from Chmura). The demand occupations were selected based on data analyzed from Chmura, Tracer, Help Wanted Online (HWOL), and WorkInTexas (WIT), as well as local knowledge of industry employment trends and economic development activities not yet publicly available.

Table 1.7 (revised for FY19 plan update)

| Demand Occupation Code, Title | NAICS | Location Quotient | Average Wages | Online Ads per Chmura | Online Ads per HWOL | Average Annual Demand |
|--|------------------------------------|-------------------|---------------|-----------------------|---------------------|-----------------------|
| 51-2011, Aircraft Structure, Surfaces, Rigging, and Systems Assemblers | * | .59 | \$53,300 | 0 | 0 | 1.6 |
| 49-3023, Automotive Service Technicians and Mechanics | 8111, 9399 | 1.17 | \$43,100 | 46 | 92 | 76 |
| 49-3031, Bus/Truck Mech./Diesel Specialist | 4841, 6111, 9399, 8111, 4842, 2131 | 1.25 | \$44,700 | 36 | 80 | 31 |
| 47-3012, Carpenter Helpers | 2362, 2371, 2373, 2382 | .84 | \$30,500 | 0 | 2 | 5 |
| 47-2061, Construction Laborers | 2131, 2362, 2371, 2373, 2382, 9399 | 1.35 | \$29,400 | 19 | 36 | 179 |
| 47-3019, Construction Trades Helpers, All Other | 2131, 2362, 2371, 2373, 2382 | 1.63 | \$29,500 | 0 | 0 | 6 |
| 49-9051, Electrical Power-Line Installers and Repairers | 2211, 2371, 2382, 9399 | 1.49 | \$49,900 | 3 | 10 | 16 |
| 47-3013, Electrician Helpers | 2131, 2362, 2371, 2382 | 1.26 | \$27,600 | 0 | 6 | 14 |
| 17-3024, Electro-Mechanical Technicians (Note: This is a proxy code for UAV/Drone Pilots.)** | 2111, 2131, 2211, 2362, 2371, 2373 | 1.04 | \$54,400 | 3 | 0 | ** |
| 25-2021, Elementary School Teachers, Except Special Education | 6111 | 1.41 | \$46,700 | 5 | 49 | 122 |
| 29-2041, Emergency Medical Technicians & Paramedics | 6211, 6221, 9399 | 1.69 | \$31,400 | 12 | 10 | 28 |
| 51-1011, First-Line Supervisors of Production and Operating Workers | 2131, 2211, 2371, 3323 | .95 | \$57,500 | 27 | 82 | 49 |
| 49-9021, Heating AC and Refrigeration Mechanics and Installers | 2382, 6111 | .90 | \$42,000 | 25 | 18 | 31 |
| 49-9041, Industrial Machinery Mechanics | 2111, 2131, 2211 | 1.26 | \$51,500 | 5 | 19 | 38 |
| 51-9061, Inspectors, Testers, Sorters, Samplers, and Weighers | 2111, 2131 | .84 | \$45,000 | 15 | 7 | 40 |
| 29-2061, LVNs | 6211, 6221, 6216 | 2.13 | \$40,700 | 58 | 125 | 119 |
| 49-9071, Maintenance/Repair Workers, General | 6111, 6221, 9399 | .99 | \$31,500 | 143 | 185 | 130 |
| 31-9092, Medical Assistants | 6211, 6221 | .90 | \$28,000 | 12 | 48 | 75 |
| 25-2022, Middle School Teachers, Except Special and Career/Technical Education | 6111 | 1.50 | \$47,400 | 3 | 35 | 58 |
| 47-3014, Painters, Paperhangers, Plasterers, and Stucco Masons Helpers | 2131, 2362, 2371, 2373, 2382 | .60 | \$28,100 | 0 | 1 | 1 |
| 47-3015, Pipelayers, Plumbers, Pipefitters, and Steamfitters Helpers | 2131, 2362, 2371, 2373, 2382 | 1.62 | \$30,600 | 7 | 2 | 15 |

| | | | | | | |
|---|------------------------|-------|----------|-----|-----|-----|
| 29-1141, Registered Nurses | 6111, 6211, 6216, 6221 | 1.14 | \$60,300 | 276 | 546 | 211 |
| 25-2031, Secondary School Teachers, Except Special and Career/Technical Education | 6111 | 1.73 | \$47,800 | 10 | 55 | 104 |
| 53-3032, Truck Drivers | 2131, 2373, 4841, 4842 | 1.37 | \$44,700 | 246 | 587 | 257 |
| 51-4121, Welders/Cutters | 2362, 2371, 3323, | 1.87 | \$42,500 | 13 | 37 | 76 |
| 49-9081, Wind Turbine Service Technicians | 2211 | 20.46 | \$63,900 | 18 | 14 | 35 |

Note: All data except HWOL Ads obtained from Chmura Occupational Reports run on 1/2/19. HWOL data obtained from LMCI Occupational Detail Report. The online ads per Chmura represent the found online ads active within the last thirty days in the selected region; data represents a sampling rather than the complete universe of postings.

*Note: Although this occupation is not connected with one of the Board’s in-demand industries, it is connected with two of the Governor’s Industry Clusters (Advanced Tech and Aerospace). It also supports exiting service members from Dyess who have similar skills from military service and are planning to relocate to other areas where this occupation is in demand.

**Note: This occupation does not have a true SOC code, consequently the need cannot be accurately represented. However the Board has knowledge of regional interest in this occupation in several industry sectors.

Table 1.7 includes the following changes to the In-Demand Occupations List:

- Removed these occupations:
 - 31-1014 Nursing Aides
 - 47-2231 Solar Photovoltaic Installers
- Added these occupations:
 - 51-2011 Aircraft Structure, Surfaces, Rigging, and Systems Assemblers
 - 25-2021 Elementary School Teachers, Except Special Education
 - 25-2022 Middle School Teachers, Except Special and Career/Technical Education
 - 25-2031 Secondary School Teachers, Except Special and Career/Technical Education
 - 47-3012 Helpers—Carpenters
 - 47-3013 Helpers--Electricians
 - 47-3014 Helpers--Painters, Paperhangers, Plasterers, and Stucco Masons
 - 47-3015 Helpers--Pipelayers, Plumbers, Pipefitters, and Steamfitters
 - 47-3019 Helpers, Construction Trades, All Other
 - 51-1011 First-Line Supervisors of Production and Operating Workers
 - 51-9061 Inspectors, Testers, Sorters, Samplers, and Weighers

The Board has identified the industries listed in Table 1.8 as in-demand, and provides the following data from Chmura: location quotient, average wages, and total average annual demand. These are industries that either currently have or are projected to have a significant number of positions that lead to economic self-sufficiency and opportunities for advancement; simply employing a lot of workers was not justification enough for inclusion on the list. These industries also affect the area economy in terms of being interconnected to other sectors, directly impacting the stability of related businesses, or influencing ancillary segments. This list of 17 industries exceeds the recommended number of 10-15 due to the fact that several of them are very closely connected to some segment of the energy sector (oil or wind).

Table 1.8 (revised for FY19 plan update)

| Industry Name, NAICS Code | Location Quotient | Average Wages | Average Annual Demand |
|------------------------------------|-------------------|---------------|-----------------------|
| 2111-Oil and Gas Extraction | 10.52 | \$92,035 | 158 |
| 2131-Support Activities for Mining | 12.81 | \$77,736 | 523 |
| 2211-Power Generation and Supply | 1.85 | \$86,874 | 110 |

| | | | |
|---|---------------|---------------|---------------|
| 2362-Nonresidential Building and Construction | .85 | \$60,517 | 69 |
| 2371-Utility System Construction | 1.28 | \$56,883 | 88 |
| 2373-Highway, Street, and Bridge Construction | 3.13 | \$43,212 | 160 |
| 2382-Building Equipment Contractors | 1.21 | \$50,816 | 299 |
| 3111-Animal Food Manufacturing | 4.17 | \$40,774 | 25 |
| 3323-Architectural and Structural Metals | 2.78 | \$56,440 | 94 |
| 4841-General Freight Trucking | .94 | \$55,951 | 104 |
| 4842-Specialized Freight Trucking | 1.32 | \$49,887 | 59 |
| 6111-Elementary and Secondary Schools | 1.38 | \$33,774 | 918 |
| 6211-Offices of Physicians | .92 | \$88,925 | 237 |
| 6221-General Medical and Surgical Hospitals | 1.27 | \$48,578 | 507 |
| 8111-Automotive Repair and Maintenance | 1.23 | \$36,972 | 130 |
| 9299-State Government | Not Available | Not Available | Not Available |
| 9399-Local Government | Not Available | Not Available | Not Available |

The Board analyzed data from HWOL, WIT, Tracer, and Chmura to develop a target industry list. Board staff also used information obtained from economic development and business partners regarding industry recruitment and retention priorities. As a result of this analysis, input from local economic development partners, and employers, the Board developed a final target industry list.

In addition to updated labor market data, changes to Table 1.8 include the removal of three industries: '3327 – Machine Shops and Threaded Products', '3331 – Ag., Construction, and Mining Machinery', and '3336 – Turbine and Power Transmission Equipment'.

1.5 Target Occupations

A list of the target occupations.

All of the demand occupations that have local training programs available are included on the Target Occupations List. The Board is aware that local providers are currently developing programs for several demand occupations not included on the Target Occupations List.

Table 1.9 (revised for FY19 plan update)

| Target Occupation Code, Title |
|---|
| 51-2011, Aircraft Structure, Surfaces, Rigging, and Systems Assemblers |
| 49-3023, Automotive Service Technicians and Mechanics |
| 49-3031, Bus/Truck Mech./Diesel Specialist |
| 49-9051, Electrical Power-Line Installers and Repairers |
| 17-3024, Electro-Mechanical Technicians ⁵ (Note: This is a proxy code for UAV/Drone Pilots.) |
| 29-2041, Emergency Medical Technicians & Paramedics |
| 51-1011, First-Line Supervisors of Production and Operating Workers |
| 49-9021, Heating AC and Refrigeration Mechanics and Installers |
| 49-9041, Industrial Machinery Mechanics |
| 51-9061, Inspectors, Testers, Sorters, Samplers, and Weighers |
| 29-2061, LVNs |

| |
|--|
| 49-9071, Maintenance/Repair Workers, General |
| 31-9092, Medical Assistants |
| 29-1141, Registered Nurses |
| 53-3032, Truck Drivers |
| 51-4121, Welders/Cutters |
| 49-9081, Wind Turbine Service Technicians |

Changes to the Target Occupations List in Table 1.9 include

- Removal of:
 - 31-1014 Nursing Aides and
 - 47-2231 Solar Photovoltaic Installers

- Addition of:
 - 51-2011 Aircraft Structure, Surfaces, Rigging, and Systems Assemblers
 - 51-1011 First-Line Supervisors of Production and Operating Workers
 - 51-9061 Inspectors, Testers, Sorters, Samplers, and Weighers

The Board uses the Competency Model Clearinghouse (part of the ONET site) to identify occupational competencies and career ladders. To determine optimal occupational matches for job seekers, CECT uses tools such as MyNextMove, Strengthfinders, and Prove-It. When the Board identifies a demand occupation for which training does not locally exist, the targeted occupation information is shared with regional providers and they are encouraged to develop a training program. The Board also explores options for accessing/bringing in the training through other providers—i.e. on-line resources, providers in other parts of state. Since TSTC is now a single system, courses offered by TSTC at other locations can now be offered at campuses in our region without having to go through an approval process.

1.6 Knowledge/Skills Analysis

An analysis of the knowledge and skills needed to meet the employment needs of the employers in the region, including employment needs in in-demand sectors and occupations.

Many of the occupations in this region require knowledge and skills in the STEM (science, technology, engineering, math) subjects. This is a recurring theme, not only for in-demand occupations, but also for in-demand industries, with many STEM-oriented occupations and knowledge/skill sets crossing industries (see the second table in section 1.3 for additional data). The table below delineates the knowledge and skills needed for each in-demand occupation, as obtained from SOCRATES. (The occupations added in the FY19 update were completed using information from O*NET Online.)

Table 1.10 (revised for FY19 plan update)

| Occupation | Knowledge Needed | Skills Needed |
|--|--|---|
| 51-2011, Aircraft Structure, Surfaces, Rigging, and Systems Assemblers | -Education and Training -Mathematics -English Language -Mechanical -Design | -Quality Control Analysis -Active Listening -Critical Thinking -Monitoring -Complex Problem Solving |
| 49-3023, Automotive Service Technicians and Mechanics | -Computers and Electronics -Engineering and Technology -Mechanical | -Equipment Selection and Maintenance -Quality Control Analysis -Repairing -Troubleshooting |
| 49-3031, Bus/Truck Mech./Diesel Specialist | -Engineering and Technology -Mechanical | -Equipment Maintenance -Operation Monitoring -Operation and Control |

| | | |
|--|--|--|
| | | -Quality Control Analysis -Repairing -Troubleshooting |
| 47-3012, Carpenter Helper | -Building and Construction -Mathematics -Mechanical -Transportation -English Language | -Active Listening -Complex Problem Solving -Coordination -Critical Thinking -Monitoring |
| 47-2061, Construction Laborers | -Engineering and Technology -Mathematics and Science | -Operation Monitoring |
| 47-3019, Construction Trades Helper, All Other* | -Building and Construction -Mathematics -Mechanical -Transportation -English Language | -Active Listening -Complex Problem Solving -Coordination -Critical Thinking -Monitoring |
| 49-9051, Electrical Power-Line Installers and Repairers | -Communications -Engineering and Technology -Mathematics and Science | -Operation Monitoring -Operation and Control -Quality Control Analysis -Repairing -Troubleshooting |
| 47-3013, Electrician Helper | -English Language -Mechanical -Building and Construction -Customer and Personal Service -Design | -Active Listening -Quality Control Analysis -Critical Thinking -Repairing -Speaking |
| 17-3024, Electro-Mechanical Technicians (Note: This is a proxy code for UAV/Drone Pilots.) | -Engineering and Technology -Manufacturing and Production -Mathematics and Science | -Equipment Maintenance -Operation Monitoring -Quality Control Analysis -Repairing -Troubleshooting |
| 25-2021, Elementary School Teachers, Except Special Education | -Education and Training -English Language -Mathematics -Psychology -Computers and Electronics | -Instructing -Speaking -Learning Strategies -Active Listening -Critical Thinking |
| 29-2041, Emergency Medical Technicians & Paramedics | -Health Services -Law and Public Safety | -Coordination -Service Orientation -Social Perceptiveness |
| 51-1011, First-Line Supervisors of Production and Operating Workers | -Production and Processing -Mechanical -Administration and Management -Personnel and Human Resources -Engineering and Technology | -Active Listening -Speaking -Coordination -Critical Thinking -Management of Personnel Resources |
| 49-9021, Heating AC and Refrigeration Mechanics and Installers | -Engineering and Technology -Mathematics and Science | -Equipment Maintenance -Installation -Operation Monitoring -Repairing -Troubleshooting |
| 49-9041, Industrial Machinery Mechanics | -Engineering and Technology -Manufacturing and Production -Mathematics and Science | -Equipment Maintenance -Operation Monitoring -Operation and Control -Quality Control Analysis -Repairing -Troubleshooting |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 51-9061, Inspectors, Testers, Sorters, Samplers, and Weighers | -Production and Processing -Mathematics -English Language | -Quality Control Analysis -Active Listening -Critical Thinking -Monitoring -Reading Comprehension |
| 29-2061, Licensed Practical and Licensed Vocational Nurses | -Health Services -Mathematics and Science | -Coordination -Service Orientation -Social Perceptiveness |
| 49-9071, Maintenance/Repair Workers, General | -Engineering and Technology -Law and Public Safety -Mathematics and Science | -Equipment Maintenance -Equipment Selection -Installation -Operation Monitoring -Operation and Control -Quality Control Analysis -Repairing -Troubleshooting |
| 31-9092, Medical Assistants | -Engineering and Technology -Health Services -Law and Public Safety -Mathematics and Science | -Process -Social Skills |
| 25-2022, Middle School Teachers, Except Special and Career/Technical Education | -Education and Training -English Language -Customer and Personal Service -Psychology -Computers and Electronics | -Instructing -Speaking -Active Listening -Learning Strategies -Reading Comprehension |
| 47-3014, Painters, Paperhangers, Plasterers, and Stucco Masons Helpers | -Building and Construction -English Language | -Coordination -Speaking |
| 47-3015, Pipelayers, Plumbers, Pipefitters, and Steamfitters Helpers | -Building and Construction -Customer and Personal Service -Mechanical -Mathematics -English Language | No skills met the O*NET minimum score. |
| 29-1141, Registered Nurses | -Health Services -Mathematics and Science | -Coordination -Service Orientation -Social Perceptiveness |
| 25-2031, Secondary School Teachers, Except Special and Career/Technical Education | -Education and Training -English Language -Psychology -Computers and Electronics -Customer and Personal Service | -Instructing -Speaking -Active Listening -Learning Strategies -Reading Comprehension |
| 53-3032, Truck Drivers | -Engineering and Technology -Law and Public Safety -Transportation | -Operation Monitoring -Operation and Control -Repairing -Troubleshooting |
| 51-4121, Welders/Cutters | -Engineering and Technology -Manufacturing and Production -Mathematics and Science | -Operation Monitoring -Operation and Control -Quality Control Analysis |
| 49-9081, Wind Turbine Service Technicians | -Engineering and Technology -Law and Public Safety -Mathematics and Science | -Equipment Maintenance -Operation Monitoring -Repairing -Troubleshooting |

*Note: O*NET does not provide characteristics for occupations with "All Other" in the title. Therefore, for purposes of this analysis the knowledge and skill lists from the Carpenter Helper occupation were used for this occupation.

1.7 Regional Workforce Analysis

An analysis of the regional workforce, including current labor force employment and unemployment data, information on labor market trends, and educational and skill levels of the workforce, including individuals with barriers to employment.

The following labor force information was obtained from Chmura.

In 2015, the population in the West Central WDA was 329,720. Between 2005 and 2015, the region's population grew at an annual average rate of 0.3%.

The region has a civilian labor force of 142,348 with a participation rate of 54.9%. Of individuals 25 to 64 in the West Central WDA, 18.5% have a bachelor's degree or higher which compares with 30.9% in the nation.

The median household income in the West Central WDA is \$42,450.

Table 1.11

Summary¹

| | Percent | | | Value | | |
|--|------------------|-------|-------|------------------|------------|-------------|
| | West Central WDA | Texas | USA | West Central WDA | Texas | USA |
| Demographics | | | | | | |
| Population ² | — | — | — | 329,720 | 27,469,114 | 321,418,820 |
| Population Annual Average Growth ² | 0.3% | 1.9% | 0.8% | 835 | 469,099 | 2,590,222 |
| Median Age ³ | — | — | — | 37.7 | 33.6 | 37.2 |
| Under 18 Years | 23.7% | 27.3% | 24.0% | 77,477 | 6,865,824 | 74,181,467 |
| 18 to 24 Years | 10.8% | 10.2% | 9.9% | 35,494 | 2,572,969 | 30,672,088 |
| 25 to 34 Years | 12.5% | 14.4% | 13.3% | 40,849 | 3,613,473 | 41,063,948 |
| 35 to 44 Years | 11.4% | 13.8% | 13.3% | 37,479 | 3,458,382 | 41,070,606 |
| 45 to 54 Years | 13.7% | 13.7% | 14.6% | 45,008 | 3,435,336 | 45,006,716 |
| 55 to 64 Years | 11.9% | 10.3% | 11.8% | 38,910 | 2,597,691 | 36,482,729 |
| 65 to 74 Years | 8.5% | 5.9% | 7.0% | 27,721 | 1,472,256 | 21,713,429 |
| 75 Years, and Over | 7.5% | 4.5% | 6.0% | 24,452 | 1,129,630 | 18,554,555 |
| Race: White | 82.1% | 70.4% | 72.4% | 268,728 | 17,701,552 | 223,553,265 |
| Race: Black or African American | 5.4% | 11.8% | 12.6% | 17,775 | 2,979,598 | 38,929,319 |
| Race: American Indian and Alaska Native | 0.6% | 0.7% | 0.9% | 2,093 | 170,972 | 2,932,248 |
| Race: Asian | 0.9% | 3.8% | 4.8% | 2,784 | 964,596 | 14,674,252 |
| Race: Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander | 0.1% | 0.1% | 0.2% | 170 | 21,656 | 540,013 |
| Race: Some Other Race | 8.5% | 10.5% | 6.2% | 27,806 | 2,628,186 | 19,107,368 |
| Race: Two or More Races | 2.5% | 2.7% | 2.9% | 8,034 | 679,001 | 9,009,073 |
| Hispanic or Latino (of any race) | 22.8% | 37.6% | 16.3% | 74,698 | 9,460,921 | 50,477,594 |
| Economic | | | | | | |

| Summary ¹ | | | | | | |
|--|------------------|-------|-------|------------------|------------|-------------|
| | Percent | | | Value | | |
| | West Central WDA | Texas | USA | West Central WDA | Texas | USA |
| Labor Force Participation Rate and Size (civilian population 16 years and over) ⁴ | 54.9% | 64.4% | 63.5% | 142,348 | 12,791,590 | 157,940,014 |
| Armed Forces Labor Force ⁴ | 1.2% | 0.5% | 0.4% | 3,113 | 97,573 | 1,025,497 |
| Veterans, Age 18-64 ⁴ | 7.7% | 5.9% | 5.8% | 14,893 | 955,863 | 11,371,344 |
| Median Household Income ^{3,4} | — | — | — | \$42,450 | \$52,576 | \$53,482 |
| Per Capita Income ^{3,4} | — | — | — | \$21,792 | \$26,513 | \$28,555 |
| Poverty Level (of all people) ⁴ | 18.6% | 17.7% | 15.6% | 56,540 | 4,500,034 | 47,755,606 |
| Households Receiving Food Stamps ⁴ | 13.0% | 13.5% | 13.0% | 15,465 | 1,218,803 | 15,089,358 |
| Mean Commute Time (minutes) ⁴ | — | — | — | 17.5 | 25.2 | 25.7 |
| Commute via Public Transportation ⁴ | 0.5% | 1.6% | 5.1% | 673 | 182,962 | 7,157,671 |
| Union Membership ⁵ | 4.3% | 5.0% | 11.1% | — | — | — |
| Educational Attainment, Age 25-64 | | | | | | |
| No High School Diploma ⁴ | 16.3% | 17.1% | 12.0% | 26,023 | 2,319,575 | 19,939,890 |
| High School Graduate ⁴ | 32.5% | 24.7% | 26.5% | 52,037 | 3,357,076 | 44,000,387 |
| Some College, No Degree ⁴ | 25.7% | 23.2% | 21.9% | 41,141 | 3,145,643 | 36,270,359 |
| Associate's Degree ⁴ | 6.9% | 7.1% | 8.7% | 11,083 | 959,102 | 14,487,486 |
| Bachelor's Degree ⁴ | 13.5% | 18.9% | 19.7% | 21,528 | 2,560,609 | 32,646,533 |
| Postgraduate Degree ⁴ | 5.0% | 9.1% | 11.2% | 8,073 | 1,234,968 | 18,533,513 |
| Individuals with Barriers to Employment | | | | | | |
| Disconnected Youth ^{4,6} | 4.2% | 3.7% | 3.3% | 789 | 55,546 | 572,277 |
| Disabled, Age 18-64 ⁴ | 14.3% | 9.9% | 10.2% | 25,876 | 1,576,781 | 19,703,061 |
| Disabled, Age 18-64, Labor Force Participation Rate and Size ⁴ | 43.0% | 44.3% | 41.2% | 11,139 | 699,211 | 8,119,295 |
| Foreign Born ⁴ | 5.1% | 16.5% | 13.1% | 16,762 | 4,296,948 | 41,056,885 |
| Speak English Less Than Very Well (population 5 yrs and over) ⁴ | 5.1% | 14.2% | 8.6% | 15,556 | 3,435,260 | 25,305,202 |

Source: [JobsEQ®](#)

1, Census 2010, unless noted otherwise

2, Census 2015, annual average growth rate since 2005

3, Median values for certain aggregate regions (such as MSAs) may be estimated as the weighted averages of the median values from the composing counties.

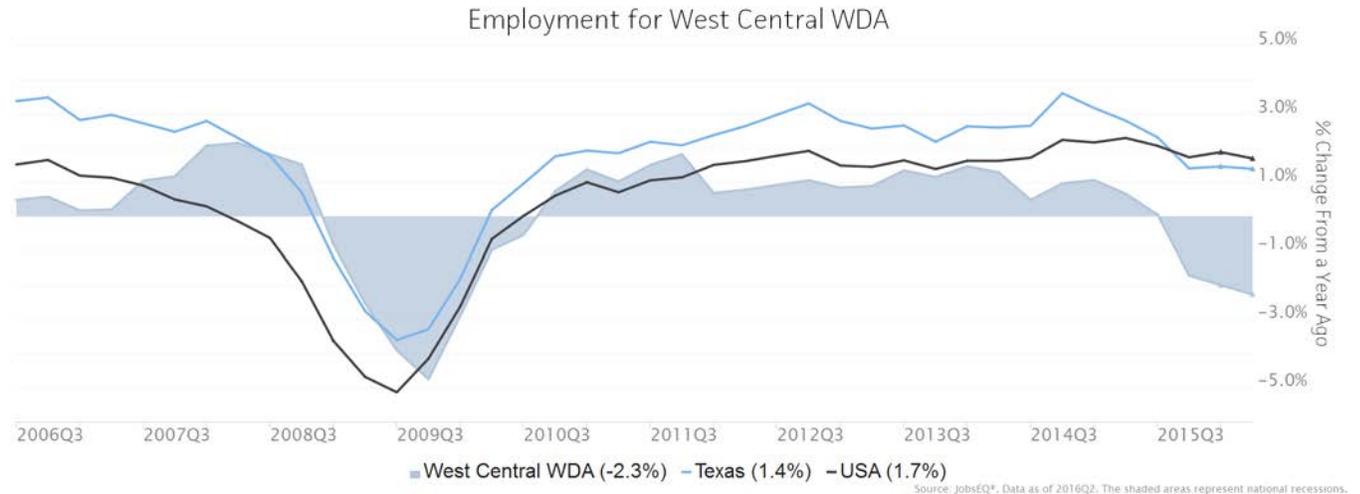
4, ACS 2010-2014

5, 2014; Current Population Survey, unionstats.com, and Chmura; county- and zip-level data are best estimates based upon industry-, MSA-, and state-level data

6, Disconnected Youth are 16-19 year olds who are (1) not in school, (2) not high school graduates, and (3) either unemployed or not in the labor force.

Employment Trends

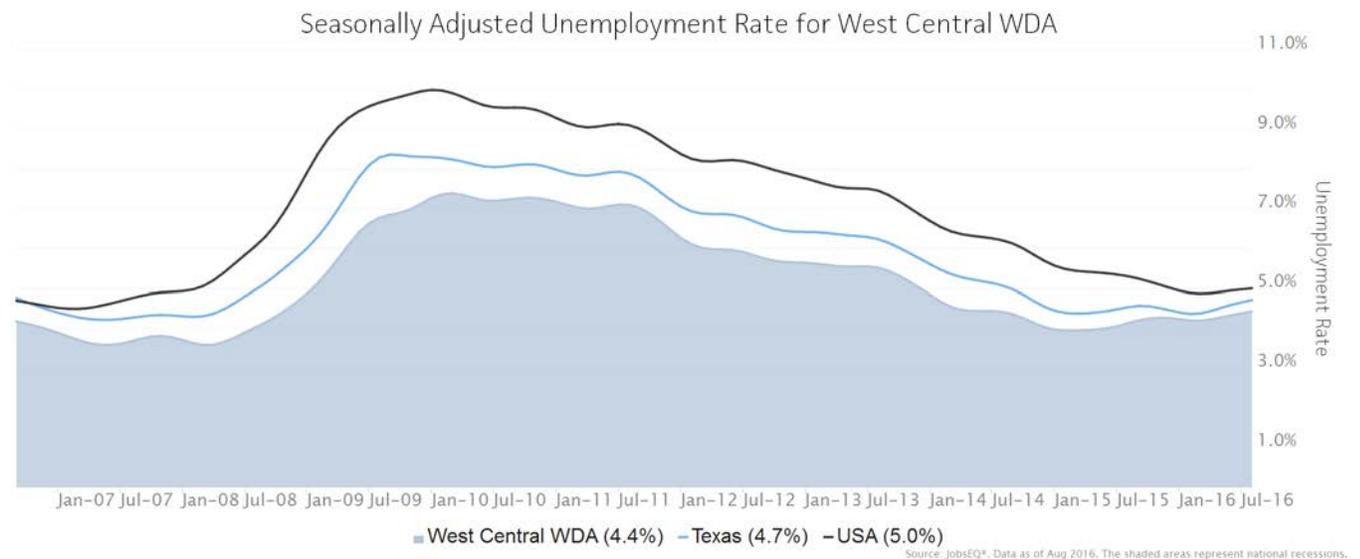
As of 2016Q2, total employment for the West Central WDA was 139,883 (based on a four-quarter moving average). Over the year ending 2016Q2, employment declined 2.3% in the region.



Employment data are derived from the Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages, provided by the Bureau of Labor Statistics and imputed where necessary. Data are updated through 2015Q4 with preliminary estimates updated to 2016Q2.

Unemployment Rate

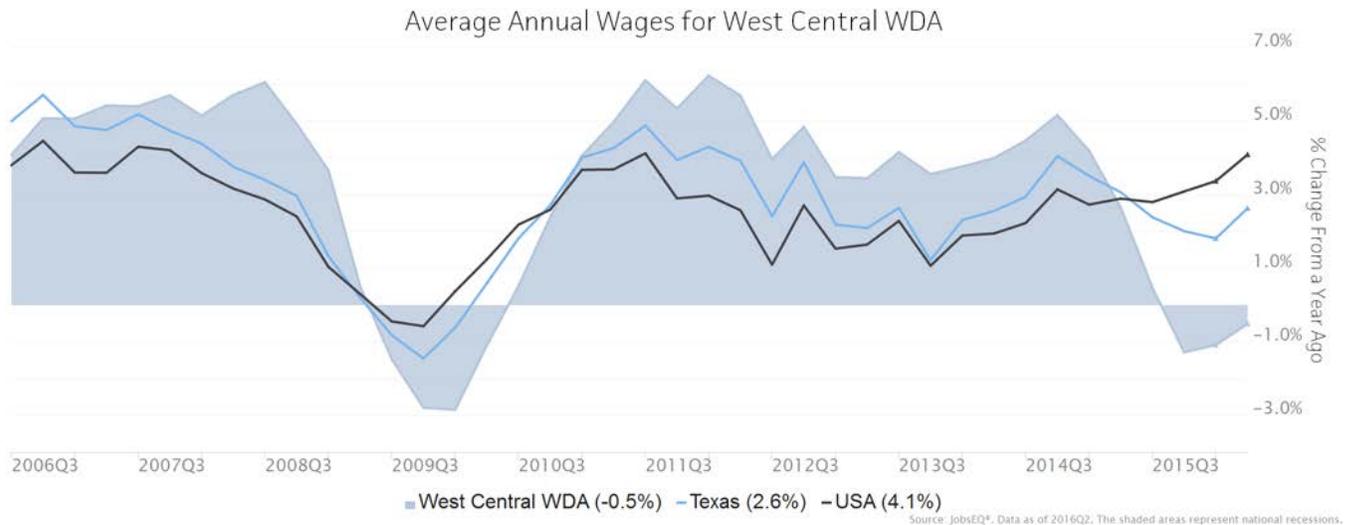
The seasonally adjusted unemployment rate for the West Central WDA was 4.4% as of August 2016. The regional unemployment rate was lower than the national rate of 5.0%. One year earlier, in August 2015, the unemployment rate in the West Central WDA was 4.1%.



Unemployment rate data are from the Local Area Unemployment Statistics, provided by the Bureau of Labor Statistics and updated through August 2016.

Wage Trends

The average worker in the West Central WDA earned annual wages of \$37,732 as of 2016Q2. Average annual wages per worker decreased 0.5% in the region during the preceding four quarters. For comparison purposes, annual average wages were \$53,084 in the nation as of 2016Q2.



Annual average wages per worker data are derived from the Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages, provided by the Bureau of Labor Statistics and imputed where necessary. Data are updated through 2015Q4 with preliminary estimates updated to 2016Q2.

1.8 Analysis of Regional Workforce Development Activities

An analysis of workforce development activities in the region, including education and training.

Note: *This analysis must include the strengths and weaknesses of workforce development activities and an evaluation of the effectiveness of programs and services. It must evaluate the Board's capacity to provide workforce development activities to address the identified education and skills needs of the workforce. The analysis must include individuals with barriers to employment. The analysis also must address the employment needs of employers.*

Workforce Development Activities—Core Program Services

The following programs are made available to the region through contracts with the Board's subrecipients, CECT (for workforce services—all except the last bullet) and Child Care Associates (for child care services).

- Wagner-Peyser-funded employment services
- Trade Adjustment Assistance
- Choices Program
- Choices NCP Program
- SNAP E&T Program
- WIOA Adult and Dislocated Worker Title I services
- WIOA Youth services
- National Dislocated Worker Grant
- Military Family Support Pilot Program
- Child Care services

Funding from the workforce programs is funneled into a recently developed service delivery structure that serves customers according to their needs, as opposed to categorizing them by program. The Board believes the traditional structure for “case management” programs where all aspects of the program are delivered by a single staff person is inefficient. The two primary weaknesses of this approach are:

- Staff is expected to perform all functions from interviewing to file management to interaction with external partners, and possibly including group presentations.
- Customers tend to be labeled and served by program design rather than being served according to their needs. For example, TANF recipients tend to be labeled as “Choices customers” and served only within the confines of Choices program funds.

The Board believes it would be more efficient to engage staff according to their strengths and aptitudes rather than assigning them all of the tasks that need to be performed in a linear case management model. The Board also believes that serving (and perceiving) customers according to their needs results in more successful outcomes for them. To this end, the Board has been working with the previous and current subrecipients to design a function-based service delivery structure that optimizes staff strengths and focuses on addressing customers’ needs.

The Board procured an outside consultant to assist the subrecipient with developing tools and resources needed for implementation. At the time this plan is being written, CECT is in the process of implementing the new structure. Essentially, job seekers are served as follows.

- The Job Attainment unit is responsible for working with customers seeking assistance in the resource room. The staff in this unit provide job matching services for customers seeking employment. Staff helps customers complete online applications and update their WIT portfolios to ensure good matches. They show customers online career exploration tools. They help customers brush up their application and resume skills, and boost their confidence in finding a job. This unit is also responsible for providing labor market information and other local job-related information to customers. Staff may also refer customers to other staff in the Center or outside resources as appropriate.
- The Intake unit is responsible for interviewing customers interested in services beyond those provided in the resource room. Intake staff listen to what the customer tells them and assesses work history, skills, education level, job search skills and support needs. Once this general assessment is complete, Intake staff determine next steps which may include a variety of actions:
 - Referral to outside resources for services not provided by Workforce Solutions
 - Gathering documents and information to determine eligibility for WIOA funds
 - Verifying eligibility for Choices and SNAP E&T programs
 - Conducting orientations
 - Determining with the customer the best course of action, which could include referral to other units for customized services:
 - ✓ Job Attainment
 - ✓ Training
 - ✓ Career Counseling
- The Career Counseling unit is responsible for working with customers who have been determined eligible for certain Workforce Solutions programs, but who are primarily interested in receiving intensive help to find a job. Staff in this unit work with customers to help them find a job and meet any programmatic requirements they may have. They conduct comprehensive needs assessments, identify barriers to work and/or school and – together with the customer – develop employment plans with long-term goals. They leverage internal and external resources to provide customer support, track progress, and write counselor notes.

- The Training Unit works with education and training institutions to understand programs of study, enrollment requirements, costs, and expected outcomes. They share this information with customers interested in training and provide career advice. The Training unit schedules assessments as needed and analyzes results; they interview customers about suitability for training, potential barriers, and support needs; they use the ETPS and target occupations list to make recommendations, develop employment plans, create ITAs for training sponsorship, communicate with training institutions; provide ongoing services to customers; and conduct post-employment entry follow-up.

Employers are served by the subrecipient's Employer Services Unit (ESU), which provides assistance related to hiring, assessment, job matching, job referral, job requirements, job postings and assistance related to immediate needs of the business such as prevailing wage rates and screening. ESU staff may also be called upon to make presentations to employers, economic development entities, partner agencies, and job seeker groups. They also develop subsidized employment/paid work experience agreements with private employers as well as non-profit/community resource entities. To better reflect this expanded role, the Employer Services Unit is being renamed to the Partner Relations Unit. This new name will also demonstrate that staff focus more on building relationships with employers rather simply promoting workforce services to them.

Staff in these functional units are trained to serve customers across program lines.

Workforce Development Activities—Board-Administered Initiatives

In addition to contracted program services, the Board engages in the following initiatives to address the education and skill needs of the workforce, as well as the employment needs of employers.

In February 2008 the Board piloted its Career Pathways program in response to discussions with local employers concerned about their workforce pipeline. The Career Pathways program is a three-part initiative designed to encourage high school graduation, improve the transition of youth from school to work or post-secondary education, and promote retention of our future workforce within the region. The first part of this initiative facilitates connections with employers and middle and high school students through Career Day events, which are organized by Board staff. These regional events are held at the civic center and allow students to speak directly with employers from various industries, community college and technical school representatives, and workforce solutions staff. This provides students with a direct opportunity to learn about local industries, available occupations, and the skills/education required for those positions. It also enables students to find out, directly from education providers, the types of training programs that are locally available and the process for application and enrollment. Junior and senior students are also able to participate in mock interviews with professionals from the community. Since the start of the program over 20,500 students from 50 schools in the region have participated in Career Day events. The second part of this initiative consists of made-to-order presentations conducted by the Career Consultant to students in area elementary, junior high, and high schools. Presentations cover information on higher education options, employability skills, job search skills, and projections for Board area and statewide jobs. To date, 76 presentations have been made to more than 3,000 area students. The third part of this initiative involves the development of Career Guides which mirror TEA's 16 career clusters. These guides are one page customizable handouts that highlight high school and local technical/college courses, wage information, as well as the online career assistance tools. These handouts are made available at the Career Days, presentations, Workforce website, and to school personnel when requested. Another role of the Career Consultant is to coordinate campus visits of the Trailblazer operated by the Texas Alliance for Minorities in Engineering (TAME). This 40-foot one-of-a-kind mobile

science museum features exhibits in energy, space, weather, biotechnology, and aerodynamics. It is geared towards engaging students in 3rd-8th grade in the STEM field, and to date over 4,500 students from 28 school districts have participated in the trailer's hands-on engaging exhibits.

Due to the high volume of activity in the oil and gas sector, as well as regional skill gaps in the STEM subjects, the West Central Board partnered with the Concho Valley and Permian Basin boards to establish a regional planning group, which became the West Texas Energy Consortium (WTxEC or "the Consortium") in 2013. Initially funded by the Texas Workforce Commission, the Consortium has successfully competed for and secured Wagner-Peyser 7b grants totaling \$1,495,000 for the past three years to address the needs of the 49-county area served by the three boards. To date, the Consortium has sponsored over 27 conferences and workshops with 14 more planned in 2017, provided training for over 561 high school and post-secondary students in CTE/STEM courses, and has a membership of over 1,700 individuals/organizations. As mentioned in sections 1.3 and 1.6, the Board recognizes an increasing need for workers with knowledge and skills in STEM subjects. Initiatives in the upcoming year include the following strategies for building a STEM workforce pipeline:

1. WTxEC will host Family STEM Festivals to promote, inspire, and engage youth in STEM activities and to introduce children and parents to STEM careers.
2. WTxEC will host a STEM Summer Camp that will give students real-world experiences in STEM education through university involvement with professors in STEM fields.
3. WTxEC will provide funding to support enrollment of low and moderate income students in dual-credit programs, especially those courses in STEM fields or related to the energy industry. Funding will be provided to local community/technical colleges that provide dual credit courses to local ISDs. Colleges will utilize a scholarship application process to identify students needing financial assistance for tuition, books or other fees necessary for enrollment and participation. A minimum of 60 scholarships will be awarded in the West Central area.
4. WTxEC will provide funding for post-secondary scholarships to adult learners to enroll in high demand/high pay and STEM training. A minimum of 45 scholarships will be awarded for enrollment in programs at colleges and technical schools in the West Central area.
5. WTxEC will host its second annual E3 Summit for educators. It provides education professionals with opportunities to engage in hands-on activities, participate in content-based discussions, share classroom materials, learn about web-based teaching resources, and exchange best practices for teaching science, technology, math, and language arts courses. It also provides an opportunity for educators to connect with business and community leaders.
6. WTxEC will launch TxGradU8, the first high school degree planning app for Texas 8th-12th graders that meets TEA requirements and complies with House Bill 5 and 18 reporting. It will be available on iTunes and Google Play. It is a tool for students and counselors to track Foundation classes and Endorsement classes up to graduation.

Serving Individuals with Barriers to Employment

The Board uses many resources for serving individuals with barriers to employment, particularly those with disabilities. In its workforce centers, the Board employs the following assistive devices to help customers with disabilities access job search resources (each device is located in all centers unless otherwise indicated):

- Accessible workstations
- Height adjustable desks and chairs
- Screen Magnifier Software (MAGic)
- Screen Reader Software (JAWS)
- Large print and reverse color keyboards

- 19" monitor
- Headphones
- Trackball mouse
- Speech Amplification System (Pocket Talkers)
- Telephones with volume control and hearing aid compatible
- Video Relay Services (Sorenson)
- Written materials for orientations, workshops, trainings, etc.
- Automatic door openers (Abilene offices)

Partnerships with sign language interpreter services allow job search workshops to be conducted with a certified interpreter, enabling those with hearing impairments to receive the same information and guidance.

Board staff participates on the RCTP (Regionally Coordinated Transportation Plan) committee which considers transportation across the region, including the 5310 federal funding for the elderly and individuals with a disability.

The Board participates in the annual ADA recognition event, celebrating the anniversary of Americans with Disabilities Act and hosted by Disability In Action, by having a booth and staff on site to answer questions and pass out information to attendees regarding our services.

Individuals from TWSVRS have an itinerant presence in the Abilene workforce center and have previously made presentations to center staff to educate them on VR services. This collaboration allows for greater ease of referrals as well as immediate on-site consultations for workforce customers who may require those services. In addition, staff periodically receive training for addressing the needs of individuals with disabilities (staff has already received the VR101 training).

For individuals who have limited English proficiency, the Board's subrecipients use the following strategies:

- Some staff are able to translate for Spanish-speaking persons.
- For languages other than Spanish, staff have access to a language line service.
- The following tagline is used on social media headers as well as on all documents in the top five local non-English languages, as space permits, "Language services available free of charge."

Effectiveness of Services

The Board believes the services and activities available through subrecipients, as well as from the Board, are effective in addressing local needs; however, the Board believes there is always opportunity for improvement. The Board regularly considers the effectiveness of the service delivery system, the responsiveness of activities, and the impact or outcomes. To this end, the following strategies are employed to regularly evaluate the local system and make improvements. Board staff meets monthly to review performance for all programs and services. While the review primarily focuses on subrecipient performance and financial management, it also includes an assessment of the Board's activities related to oversight, management and technical assistance. Board staff also meets monthly with the local workforce subrecipient management team, and the Board Workforce Contract Manager meets weekly with the subrecipient's Project Director. These meetings are used as an opportunity to review performance, discuss current and planned initiatives, and dialog about issues and opportunities. The workforce subrecipient also hosts regular "partner" meetings that include the childcare subrecipient, as well as other

partners. This meeting focuses primarily on operational rather than strategic issues. Additionally, the workforce subrecipient is required to submit monthly reports to the Board Workforce Contract Manager that relate information on issues such as staffing changes, staff training, quality assurance activities, financial status and projections, and emerging issues. Those reports also contain information about the status of performance measures, strategies the subrecipient is using to improve deficiencies, and customer success stories. Formalized methods of ensuring services meet customer needs and are provided appropriately include monitoring reviews of all programs no less often than annually. The Board’s Quality Assurance Specialist reviews all proprietary programs at least once per year (and provides an annual report to the Board members for review), and the Board contracts with an external consultant to conduct annual financial reviews. The Board EO Officer reviews program and physical accessibility annually to ensure services and facilities are accessible to individuals with disabilities.

The performance measures contracted by TWC to the Board are also contracted by the Board to the subrecipient. These measures gauge how many job seekers and employers receive workforce development services and how well they benefited from those services (successfully completed training, obtained employment, received assistance with filling job openings, etc.). This provides an objective evaluation of the effectiveness of programs and services. For Board Contract Year (BCY) ’16, the Board met all key performance measures, with the exception of the Choices measure, though significant improvement was made after the departure of the prior workforce subrecipient. For BCY17, the Board is currently meeting the ‘Claimant Reemployment within 10 Weeks’ and ‘Number of Employers Receiving Workforce Assistance’ measures. Also, the Board is exceeding the ‘Choices Full Work Rate’ measure. Proposed targets for WIOA performance measures are discussed in section 2.17.

The Board’s effectiveness in providing services is also seen with over 45 hiring events for different employers that were held in the first 10 months of 2016. One of the largest hiring events this past year was for approximately 300 positions with a construction company in a rural community. Over 600 job-seekers participated in the event and the employer was able to fill their positions as a result of this event. In addition, the Board has managed funding well this past year, despite an unexpected transition of subrecipients in April. By partnering with employers, educators and economic development, the Board has successfully leveraged funding that increased the availability of training and trained workers.

In addition to the Board’s local review of workforce services and operations, TWC performs a review of those same elements as part of an annual recertification process. The results of the review include a monitoring report and a board report card. The most recent report card for West Central shows this area scored as follows.

Table 1.12

| Element | Score |
|---|--------------------|
| Capacity to Oversee/Manage Funds/Service Delivery | “Within Standards” |
| Historically Contracted Measure Performance: | |
| • % at 95% of Target or Better | 86.67% |
| • # Below 90% of Target | 1 |
| • # Below 85% of Target | 0 |
| Any disallowed costs? | No |
| Any disallowed costs greater than 1% of allocation? | No |
| Description of Repeat/Significant Findings of NonCompliance | None |

Meeting Employment Needs of Employers

Although the Board sponsors training through ITAs and special initiatives, the actual provision of education and classroom training (“CRT”, which also includes distance learning environments) is conducted by local training providers. A matrix showing the area providers’ capacity to address training needs for demand occupations is provided below.

Table 1.13

| In-Demand Occupation | Average Annual Demand | Annual Regional Training Capacity |
|--|-----------------------|-----------------------------------|
| 51-2011 – Aircraft Structure, Surfaces, Rigging, and Systems Assemblers | 1.6 | 7 ² |
| 49-3023 – Automotive Service Tech. | 76 | 57 ¹ |
| 49-3031 – Bus/Truck Mech./Diesel Spec. | 31 | 31 ² |
| 47-3012 – Carpenter Helpers | 5 | 0 |
| 47-2061 – Construction Laborers | 179 | 0 |
| 47-3019 – Construction Trades Helpers, All Other | 6 | 0 |
| 49-9051 – Electrical Power-Line Installers and Repairers | 16 | 14 ¹ |
| 47-3013 – Electrician Helpers | 14 | 0 |
| 17-3024 – Electro-Mechanical Technicians (proxy for Drone Pilots) | ** | ** |
| 25-2021 – Elementary School Teachers, Except Special Education | 122 | 0 |
| 29-2041 – Emergency Medical Technicians & Paramedics | 28 | 23 ² |
| 51-1011 – First-Line Supervisors of Production and Operating Workers | 49 | N/A |
| 49-9021 – Heating AC and Refrigeration Mechanics and Installers | 31 | 14 ¹ |
| 49-9041 – Industrial Machinery Mechanics | 38 | 11 ² |
| 51-9061 – Inspectors, Testers, Sorters, Samplers, and Weighers | 40 | N/A |
| 29-2061 – LVNs | 119 | 109 ¹ |
| 49-9071 – Maintenance/Repair Workers, General | 130 | N/A |
| 31-9092 – Medical Assistants | 75 | 14 ¹ |
| 25-2022 – Middle School Teachers, Except Special and Career/Technical Education | 58 | 0 |
| 47-3014 – Painters, Paperhangers, Plasterers, and Stucco Masons Helpers | 1 | 0 |
| 47-3015 – Pipelayers, Plumbers, Pipefitters, and Steamfitters Helpers | 15 | 0 |
| 29-1141 – Registered Nurses | 211 | 66 ¹ |
| 25-2031 – Secondary School Teachers, Except Special and Career/Technical Education | 104 | 0 |
| 53-3032 – Truck Drivers | 257 | 80 ² |
| 51-4121 – Welders/Cutters | 76 | 103 ¹ |
| 49-9081 – Wind Turbine Service Technicians | 35 | 23 ² |

**Note: This occupation does not have a true SOC code, consequently the need cannot be accurately represented. However the Board has knowledge of regional interest in this occupation in several industry sectors.

1. Note: Source is Chmura Awards Data. Data as of the 2016-2017 academic year; obtained from the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES).
2. Note: Source is THECB database.

Table 1.13 includes the following changes to the In-Demand Occupations List:

- Removed these occupations:
 - 31-1014 Nursing Aides
 - 47-2231 Solar Photovoltaic Installers
- Added these occupations:
 - 51-2011 Aircraft Structure, Surfaces, Rigging, and Systems Assemblers
 - 25-2021 Elementary School Teachers, Except Special Education
 - 25-2022 Middle School Teachers, Except Special and Career/Technical Education
 - 25-2031 Secondary School Teachers, Except Special and Career/Technical Education
 - 47-3012 Helpers—Carpenters
 - 47-3013 Helpers--Electricians
 - 47-3014 Helpers--Painters, Paperhangers, Plasterers, and Stucco Masons
 - 47-3015 Helpers--Pipelayers, Plumbers, Pipefitters, and Steamfitters
 - 47-3019 Helpers, Construction Trades, All Other
 - 51-1011 First-Line Supervisors of Production and Operating Workers
 - 51-9061 Inspectors, Testers, Sorters, Samplers, and Weighers

Section II Operational Elements

2.1 System Description

A description of the workforce development system in the local area that identifies:

- a. the programs that are included in the system; and*
- b. how the Board will support the strategy identified in the State Plan and work with the entities carrying out core programs and other workforce development programs to support alignment to provide services, including programs of study authorized under the Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act of 2006, that support the strategy identified in the State Plan under WIOA §102(b)(1)(E).*

As mentioned in section 1.2, the Board contracts with a subrecipient entity, CECT, to operate the workforce center system, through which core and other program services are provided, including: WIOA Adult, Dislocated Worker, and Youth Programs; Wagner-Peyser Employment Services Program; services to Unemployment Insurance recipients; TAA; TANF/Choices Program; SNAP E&T Program; and Choices Noncustodial Parent Program. The service delivery system consists of one full-service workforce center in Abilene and three branch offices in Brownwood, Sweetwater and Snyder. The Abilene Workforce Center serves as the hub for the region and, in addition to workforce services, houses staff from the Texas Veterans Commission (TVC), and the Texas Veterans Leadership Program. Staff from Texas Workforce Solutions—Vocational Rehabilitation Services (TWSVRS) and Job Corps also have a regular presence in the center. In addition, workforce staff have an itinerant presence at the adult education location in Abilene.

The Board supports the Commission’s integrated service delivery strategy by conveying those expectations contractually with subrecipients. The Board has taken this further by working with the workforce subrecipient (both previous and current) to design a function-based service delivery structure that better utilizes staff strengths and that serves customers based on their needs. In essence, Board and subrecipient staff examined the job tasks of each workforce employee and realigned them according to similarities of actions and the needed skills and aptitudes. With staff input, workflows were then restructured and staff were reassigned to functional positions. As mentioned in section 1.8, the Board is interested in better alignment of staff responsibilities with their natural strengths and aptitudes (resulting

in greater staff performance and satisfaction), and in eliminating program barriers (to the degree allowable) in serving customers (resulting in better outcomes for customers).

In WIOA regulations, adult education/literacy (AEL) and vocational rehabilitation services are also core programs. The Board has long-standing partnerships with the entities that provide those services. Staff from TWSVRS are provided with space on an itinerant basis at the Abilene center office. This collaboration allows for greater ease of referrals as well as immediate on-site consultations for workforce customers who may require those services. The Board has a history of collaboration with Abilene Adult Education (AAE; the AEL provider for the entire West Central area) to serve mutual customers. One example of this is a recently concluded project in which the Board and AAE collaborated with 211-A Call for Help to survey customers across the region to determine their knowledge of and satisfaction with services from both workforce and AAE.

There are four technical/community colleges in this area that provide training to address the employment needs of employers. The Board works with all of these providers to coordinate services for job seekers and to ensure training meets the needs of employers. In fact, the Board has long-standing relationships with these entities, as exemplified by the many joint initiatives undertaken to address the needs of area employers. In addition to partnering with providers to list their training programs on the Eligible Training Provider List (ETPL), the Board has on many occasions partnered with providers, economic development entities, and community-based organizations to provide short-term training opportunities to address skill shortages in the West Central Texas area. Through its involvement in employer and economic development groups, the Board has participated in developing short-term training modules (locally referred to as “fast track training”) to alleviate skill shortages in occupations such as heavy equipment operators, welding, and wind energy technicians. The Board recently partnered with the Coleman Economic Development Corporation to train Certified Nurse Aides (CNAs). To alleviate the current and projected shortages of CNAs, the Coleman 4A EDC, Coleman County Medical Center, Central Texas Opportunities, Inc., Workforce Solutions, and seven health care agencies in Coleman County collaborated to train 45 individuals over a 12 to 15 month period as CNAs and to establish an on-going training program to address recurring needs. Final results of the number of individuals who passed the exam and who obtained employment are pending the completion of clinical hours, however a total of 62 students completed the training. The Board also recently partnered with Cisco College, Abilene ISD, and the Development Corporation of Abilene (DCOA) to provide dual-credit career and CTE courses in electrical, heating, air conditioning, industrial maintenance, plumbing, and welding to secondary school students (11th and 12th graders). The goal was creation of a career pathway for high school students to transition into post-secondary education or directly into high demand occupations in the construction and manufacturing sectors to address immediate and future shortages resulting from retirements. Students obtained a level 1 certification as well as industry-recognized certifications as a result of the training. Upon completion of the training, the students were placed with employers in paid internships. The goal of this program was to train 40 students, however 59 completed with the skills necessary to seek employment after graduation in the Industrial Technology, HVAC, and Electrical Trades. The Coleman and Cisco/DCOA projects officially completed December 31, 2016, however the Board still provides scholarship funding to area colleges for dual-credit CTE and post-secondary students in STEM courses through the Wagner Peyser 7b funding provided by WTxEC. These are just some examples of the types of partnerships and economic development activities in which the Board regularly engages.

2.2 Expanded Access to Services

A description of how the Board will work with entities carrying out core programs to:

- a. expand access to employment, training, education, and supportive services for eligible individuals, particularly eligible individuals with barriers to employment;*
- b. facilitate the development of career pathways and co-enrollment, as appropriate, in core programs; and*
- c. improve access to activities leading to a recognized postsecondary credential (including a credential that is an industry-recognized certificate or certification, portable, and stackable).*

As mentioned in sections 1.2 and 2.1, the Board contracts with a subrecipient entity, CECT, to operate the workforce center system, through which core and other program services are provided. The Board collaborates with the subrecipient to maintain an optimum service delivery design that best meets the needs of job seekers and employers, including individuals with barriers to employment. The Board is conducting meetings with the subrecipient and area service providers to develop ways to more effectively align services. The expected outcome of these meetings is the improvement of services to youth and other individuals with barriers to employment, an increase in customer intake as well as interagency customer referrals, expanded information sharing, and the synchronization of resources among local service entities.

The Board collaborates with community-based, education, economic development, and industry-based entities to stay abreast of the needs of employers and to work strategically to meet those needs. In addition to partnering with training providers to list their training programs on the Eligible Training Provider List (ETPL), the Board has on many occasions partnered with providers, economic development entities, and community-based organizations to provide short-term training opportunities to address skill shortages in the West Central Texas area. The following initiatives are examples of current Board strategies to expand access to training, facilitate career pathways and co-enrollment, and augment the number of skilled workers with recognized credentials. The Board has agreements with Western Texas, TSTC, Cisco and Ranger colleges to provide statewide funding for scholarships to increase the number of workers with portable, industry-recognized skills certifications in the region in STEM, high demand, and energy-related occupations. The Board is also collaborating with the WTxEC, Concho Valley Board, and Permian Basin Board to launch a career planning mobile app and a virtual STEM resources center housed on the WTxEC website. TxGradU8, the high school degree planning app for Texas 8th-12th graders, is a tool for students and counselors to track Foundation classes and Endorsement classes up to graduation. It meets TEA requirements and complies with House Bill 5 and 18 reporting. The E3 Center of Excellence is an online community resource site for students, parents, educators, and industry leaders. This resource hub will provide information on STEM and CTE curriculum, career exploration, and industry trends.

2.3 Services for Target Populations

A description of the strategies for coordinating programs and services for target populations.

In addition to the aforementioned contract with CECT to operate the workforce center system (including core and other program services), the Board's strategies for serving specific target populations are provided as described below.

EMPLOYERS

Through its collaboration with economic development entities and employer groups, the Board maintains an awareness of the worker and skill needs in the West Central area. On occasion, those associations determine the existence of particular occupational shortages, which are addressed through special

training strategies. One example is the Board's recently completed project with the Development Corporation of Abilene, Abilene ISD and Cisco College on a High Demand Job Training grant to provide equipment and expand training to build the pipeline of young workers entering employment in heating and refrigeration, electrical trades, and industrial maintenance. Another example is the Board's key role in establishing sector partnerships in the manufacturing and healthcare industries. Board staff and partners are currently recruiting businesses and other important players, as well as performing additional legwork to launch these partnerships. Other examples of collaboration with employers are mentioned in sections below on services to communities and workers.

COMMUNITIES

The Board addresses workforce needs of the community through connections with resource agencies, education, economic development, and industry-based entities to stay abreast of the needs of employers and to work strategically to meet those needs. Collaboration with these entities also provides a method to inform Board subrecipients regarding local service initiatives; helps to ensure, to the extent possible, that internal services are not duplicative of those provided by other organizations; and enables the Board to align its service strategies with those of partner entities. One example of this is participation by Board and subrecipient staff (from both workforce and child care entities) in the Basic Needs Network (BNN). Hosted by 2-1-1, the BNN is a regional consortium of resource agencies covering the same service delivery area as the Board area that provide assistance for various types of needs. In addition, the Board actively participates in workshops, events and conferences with the Texas Midwest Community Network, a regional organization focused on providing support and networking opportunities to engage with chambers of commerce, local elected officials, community members, and economic development partners. Another example is Board staff involvement with Team Workforce, an initiative of the Abilene Chamber of Commerce to attract, retain and grow the area workforce. Team Workforce includes local business owners, economic development, educators from local schools as well as colleges and universities, elected officials and workforce as part of 40+ member team as well as a virtual team of 75+ individuals who provide input through an on-line idea-sharing portal. Finally, the Board also participated in the Community Health Needs Assessment with Hendrick Medical Center. The results of the assessment were presented to community members and teams were formed to develop recommendations for actions/ strategies to address key issues. The recommendations were presented in late December and community teams are now being formed to take next steps in turning recommendations in to actions.

JOB SEEKERS

Emerging and returning workers may not know what type of occupation would be an optimal match for them. Many job seekers select an occupation or training program based on a general impression of what the job entails, or simply based on its average wages. Individuals who select a training program based on these types of assumptions may not have the interest or ability to complete it. In addition, as the local labor market changes (for example, fluctuating opportunities in the energy industry), individuals need a way to discover the functions and requirements of demand occupations.

The Board will continue to use a variety of assessment tools, such as O*NET and Prove-It® to identify skills and abilities, as well as interest inventories and fit assessments to determine potential career options for job-seekers. Customers receive information on career paths and occupations in demand, growth and emerging industry clusters to assist them in making informed choices. Individuals also receive one-on-one assistance for job matching, developing a career plan and assessing needs for support services or referrals to other agencies. Workshops, seminars and networking events (such as job club) focus on career transition, career management, enhancing and updating skills, understanding the area labor market, tools and techniques for connecting with employers, and other topics of interest identified by customers. The

Board's website also offers Career Corner, which contains assessment tools to help individuals determine their optimum career match.

WORKERS

Incumbent workers looking to make a career change who are uncertain what type of occupation to consider may also receive assessments and information, as mentioned above for job seekers. Workers interested in more individualized career services or training services may be assessed for those as well.

Workers in danger of losing their job due to layoff receive services from the Board's Rapid Response Coordinator. The Coordinator organizes a team to provide information and services to individuals facing a layoff. The Coordinator may also arrange layoff aversion strategies, as feasible, to save worker jobs. Rapid Response services are outlined in more detail in sections 2.4 and 2.8.

Workers may also receive services through the Workforce Investment Fund (WIF). The WIF was relaunched in late 2015 and serves only incumbent workers employed by businesses with fewer than 100 workers. To date, three grants have been awarded—one to train FAA Airframe and Power Plant Technicians, one to upgrade caregivers to certified nursing assistants, and one for a required one year internship for a licensed funeral home director/embalmer.

UI CLAIMANTS

The subrecipient provides Rapid Reemployment Services to claimants who meet the cutoff score. However, rather than separating them into isolated groups, they are integrated with other customers who are looking for employment and/or re-training. Through the newly redesigned function-based service delivery system, the Board is working with the workforce subrecipient to implement a structure that serves claimants in a more integrated manner with other one-stop customers. Claimants receive orientation information, assistance with WIT registration, and screening (as needed or requested) for additional services to remove barriers to employment. Claimants may be co-enrolled in WIOA Dislocated Worker Program services to receive assistance with job search or training sponsorship.

VETERANS

The Board supports services to veterans through internal contracted services as well as participation in special initiatives. Texas Veterans Commission staff is housed in the Abilene center, and all subrecipient staff across all centers are trained to provide services to veterans. A Texas Veterans Leadership Program representative is housed in the Abilene office as well. The Board's priority of service policy requires subrecipients to serve equally eligible veterans prior to other customer groups and to screen customers for veteran status in order to give eligible individuals priority. The Board participates in special veteran service initiatives such as the DOLETA/VETS Gold Card Initiative and job fairs (for example, the Red, White and You campaign).

The Board supports services to veterans through partnerships with other entities, such as the Military Affairs Committee, as well as the Military Partnership, which hosts annual events for veterans. The Board also supports the Texas Welcome Home Transition Alliance program, initiated by the governor. In addition, the Board has just received funding for the Military Family Support Pilot Program (MFSP). The MFSP is designed to better meet the needs of military spouses entering the job market at military installations in Texas. This program will provide enhanced job search assistance, assessment of skills, labor market information, resume writing and interview skills to this underserved population at Dyess Air Force Base.

INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES

The Board uses many resources for serving individuals with barriers to employment, particularly those with disabilities. In its workforce centers, the Board employs the following assistive devices to help customers with disabilities access job search resources (each device is located in all centers unless otherwise indicated):

- Accessible workstations
- Height adjustable desks and chairs
- Screen Magnifier Software (MAGic)
- Screen Reader Software (JAWS)
- Large print and reverse color keyboards
- 19" monitor
- Headphones
- Trackball mouse
- Speech Amplification System (Pocket Talkers)
- Telephones with volume control and hearing aid compatible
- Video Relay Services (Sorenson)
- Written materials for orientations, workshops, trainings, etc.
- Automatic door openers (Abilene offices)

Partnerships with sign language interpreter services allow job search workshops to be conducted with a certified interpreter, enabling those with hearing impairments to receive the same information and guidance.

Board staff participates on the RCTP (Regionally Coordinated Transportation Plan) committee which considers transportation across the region, including the 5310 federal funding for the elderly and individuals with a disability.

The Board participates in the annual ADA recognition event, celebrating the anniversary of Americans with Disabilities Act and hosted by Disability In Action, by having a booth and staff on site to answer questions and pass out information to attendees regarding our services.

Texas Workforce Solutions – Vocational Rehabilitation Services (TWSVRS) staff have an itinerant presence in the Abilene workforce center and have previously made presentations to center staff to educate them on VR services. This collaboration allows for greater ease of referrals as well as immediate on-site consultations for workforce customers who may require those services.

FOSTER YOUTH

The Board's priority of service policy requires subrecipients to serve equally eligible foster youth prior to other customer groups (except veterans) and to screen customers for foster youth status in order to give eligible individuals priority. Outreach for WIOA Youth Program services is conducted through partnerships with other youth-serving entities including foster youth agencies. The Board also works closely with BCFS to serve foster youth (which is partially funded by a Texas Workforce Commission grant). This partnership began when BCFS opened its Abilene Transition Center in 2011. Both entities make referrals to the other based on the needs of the youth and each organization's services.

STUDENTS AND THEIR PARENTS

The Board's Career Pathways program is a three-part initiative designed to encourage high school graduation, improve the transition for youth from school to work or post-secondary education, and promote retention of our future workforce within the region. The first part of this initiative facilitates connections with employers and middle and high school students through Career Day events, which are organized by Board staff. These regional events are held at the civic center and allow students to speak directly with employers from various industries, community college and technical school representatives, and workforce solutions staff. This provides students with a direct opportunity to learn about local industries, available occupations, and the skills/education required for those positions. It also enables students to find out, directly from education providers, the types of training programs that are locally available and the process for application and enrollment. Junior and senior students are also able to participate in mock interviews with professionals from the community. Since the start of the program over 20,500 students from 50 schools in the region have participated in Career Day events. The second part of this initiative consists of made-to-order presentations conducted by the Career Consultant to students in area elementary, junior high, and high schools. Presentations cover information on higher education options, employability skills, job search skills, and projections for Board area and statewide jobs. To date, 76 presentations have been made to more than 3,000 area students. The third part of this initiative involves the development of Career Guides which mirror TEA's 16 career clusters. These guides are one page customizable handouts that highlight high school and local technical/college courses, wage information, as well as the online career assistance tools. These handouts are made available at the Career Days, presentations, Workforce website, and to school personnel when requested.

Another student initiative is the coordination of campus visits of the Trailblazer operated by the Texas Alliance for Minorities in Engineering (TAME). This 40-foot one-of-a-kind mobile science museum features exhibits in energy, space, weather, biotechnology, and aerodynamics. It is geared towards engaging students in 3rd-8th grade in the STEM field, and to date over 4,500 students from 28 school districts have participated in the trailer's hands-on engaging exhibits.

In addition, youth job fairs are held that target entry-level jobs for students newly entering the job market. Students are frequently accompanied by their parents to assist them with talking to employers and completing applications.

Finally, as part of the West Texas Energy Consortium (WTxEC), the Board is integrally involved with the WTxEC's planned Family STEM Festivals. The goals of the festival are to promote, inspire and engage youth in Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) activities and to introduce children and parents to STEM careers in their local communities. These festivals will fill a critical gap in STEM education, increase access to STEM experiences for all students, and inspire the next generation of STEM professionals. Decades of research show the critical role families play in children's success and achievement—regardless of a family's socioeconomic background. Research also demonstrates that parents and guardians are the most influential in guiding a child's educational and career decisions. Family engagement is essential to strengthen STEM education and help all children realize their fullest potential. For these reasons, the festivals will include parent/guardian participation with kids in exploring options in and outside the region.

Update:

West Central was one of six workforce boards awarded a \$92,998 Texas Talent Connection grant in April 2018 to create middle-skill STEM internship programs for students in seven key industry sectors in the region: agricultural, construction, energy, manufacturing, automotive services, healthcare, and

information technology. These sectors include a significant number of middle-skill STEM occupations that offer growth opportunities and good wages. Secondary and post-secondary providers in the region offer education and training programs that allow students to earn dual-credit industry-recognized certifications aligned with these sectors. The internship model is unique in that it encompasses four ISDs (independent school districts) in four different communities across three counties that include 1A (Roscoe Early College High School), 4A (Snyder and Sweetwater ISDs) and 6A (Abilene ISD) UIL classification schools and three post-secondary providers that include two community and one technical college.

West Central received another grant in April 2018 for \$150,000 for the Student HireAbility Navigator program. The role of the Student HireAbility Navigator is to improve access to employment and training services and increase employment opportunities for job seekers with disabilities, with a specific focus on services for students with disabilities who are in the early phases of preparing for transition to postsecondary education and employment. One of the responsibilities of the Navigator is the development, planning, coordination, and promotion of systemic and collaborative strategies that result in the provision of quality pre-employment transition services for students with disabilities in the workforce development area. This includes strategies to:

- Improve the transition to postsecondary activities of students who are members of traditionally unserved and underserved populations, and
- Expand or enhance the provision of the five required pre-employment transition services to students with disabilities in the workforce development area.

REFUGEES

Subrecipients use interpreter services to assist staff in communicating with customers referred by the local office of the International Rescue Committee (IRC), as well as other customers who speak various languages not common to the West Central Texas area. Board partnerships also support language and occupational skill services to limited English proficient customers. The Workforce Development Board includes a representative from Abilene Adult Education, which provides services to individuals referred by IRC.

2.4 Employer Engagement

A description of the strategies and services that will be used in the local area:

- a. To facilitate engagement of employers in the workforce development programs, including small employers and employers in in-demand industry sectors and occupations*
- b. To support a local workforce development system that meets the needs of businesses in the local area*
- c. To better coordinate workforce development programs and economic development*
- d. To strengthen linkages between the one-stop delivery system and unemployment insurance programs*

Note: *This may include the implementation of initiatives such as incumbent worker training programs, on-the-job training programs, customized training programs, industry and sector strategies, career pathways initiatives, use of effective business intermediaries, and other business services and strategies designed to meet the needs of regional employers. These initiatives must support the strategy described above.*

In order to help current and future regional employers maintain existing jobs and create new ones, the Workforce Solutions of West Central Texas created the “Workforce Investment Fund” or WIF. This fund is specifically designed to help organizations in any of the 19 counties offset the cost of training current and new employees. The WIF targets smaller employers since it serves only incumbent workers employed by

businesses with fewer than 100 workers. To date, three grants have been awarded—one to train FAA Airframe and Power Plant Technicians, one to upgrade caregivers to certified nursing assistants, and one for a required one year internship for a licensed funeral home director/embalmer.

Another example is the Board's key role in establishing sector partnerships in the manufacturing and healthcare industries. This is a collaborative effort between community organizations, community colleges, and employers. Board staff and partners are currently recruiting businesses and other important players to provide employers an opportunity to discuss their specific needs and then work toward training alignment to meet those needs.

As mentioned in other sections, the Board coordinates services to the business sector by assigning certain responsibilities to the subrecipient Employer Services Unit, while retaining other responsibilities at the Board level. The Employer Services Unit (ESU) focuses on those services related to hiring, assessment, job matching, job referral, job requirements, job postings and assistance related to immediate needs of the business such as prevailing wage rates and screening. The Board's business service function encompasses industry sectors; economic development; connecting businesses with other businesses, education or economic development; labor market trends; business development; workforce intelligence; and projected skill needs. The Board's Business Development Consultant meets regularly with ESU staff to discuss any issues identified as a result of their interaction with employers and to provide information on emerging issues, events and activities resulting from the Board's interaction with economic development, business associations, businesses, and/or other community agencies and leaders. These meetings also incorporate a degree of accountability to ensure the ESU is meeting the needs of local employers.

The Board's Business Development Consultant also serves as the Rapid Response Coordinator. The Coordinator establishes contact, by phone or in person, with employers and representatives of affected workers—within 48 hours of receiving a WARN notice, a public announcement of a layoff, or notification that a Trade petition has been filed—to assess employer and employee early intervention needs. Within 72 hours of notification of the layoff event, the Coordinator provides the appropriate notification to TWC and organizes a response team, including subrecipient staff, to provide the following services, as applicable, to the employer and affected workers:

- immediate and on-site contact with the employer—to the extent practical or allowed by the employer—as well as representatives of the affected workers, and the local community;
- guidance and/or financial assistance to establish a labor-management committee voluntarily agreed to by labor and management, or a workforce transition committee comprising representatives of the employer, the affected workers, and the local community that devises and oversees an implementation strategy to respond to the reemployment needs of affected workers;
- emergency assistance adapted to the particular closing, layoff, or disaster;
- development of a coordinated response to the dislocation event;
- state economic development assistance, as needed;
- an orientation on available workforce program services;
- information on and assistance with filing for unemployment insurance (UI) benefits;
- information on Trade services available through Texas Workforce Centers;
- a survey of affected workers' employment, knowledge, skills, and abilities; and
- other services, such as workshops and seminars on tools that will assist with a rapid transition to new employment.

Through the newly redesigned function-based service delivery system, the Board is working with the workforce subrecipient to implement a structure that serves claimants in a more integrated manner with other one-stop customers. The subrecipient continues to provide Rapid Reemployment Services to claimants who meet the cutoff score, however rather than separating them into isolated groups, they are integrated with other customers who are looking for employment and/or re-training. Claimants receive orientation information, assistance with WIT registration, and screening (as needed or requested) for additional services to remove barriers to employment. Claimants may be co-enrolled in WIOA Dislocated Worker Program services to receive assistance with job search or training sponsorship.

2.5 Regional Economic Development and Entrepreneurship

An explanation of how the Board will coordinate local workforce investment activities with regional economic development activities that are carried out in the local area and how the Board will promote entrepreneurial-skills training and microenterprise services.

In the WIOA Combined State Plan TWC states, “the Commission recognizes Texas’ current workforce areas as their own independent regions”. Accordingly, the Board engages in economic development activities that contribute to the up-skilling of current and emergent workers, filling employment gaps for employers, and promoting economic growth for all of the communities in the 19-county area. The Board has a history of partnering with other entities to coordinate local workforce investment activities with economic development activity. The following are some of the initiatives in which the Board is presently engaged.

- Board staff is involved with Team Workforce, an initiative of the Abilene Chamber of Commerce to attract, retain and grow the area workforce. Team Workforce includes local business owners, economic development, educators from local schools as well as colleges and universities, elected officials and workforce as part of 40+ member team as well as a virtual team of 75+ individuals who provide input through an on-line idea-sharing portal.
- The Board is playing a key role in establishing sector partnerships in the manufacturing and healthcare industries. Board staff and other partners are currently recruiting businesses and other important players, as well as performing additional legwork to launch these partnerships.
- The Board is partnering with DCOA for recruitment and staffing of the new manufacturing facility.
- The Board participates in the Rural Workforce Network, which involves 6 board areas and facilitates information exchange, identification of opportunities to partner, and communication about shared projects/partners.

The following are economic development initiatives that benefit smaller companies.

- The Board has agreements with Western Texas, TSTC, Cisco and Ranger colleges to provide statewide funding for scholarships to increase the number of workers with portable, industry-recognized skills certifications in the region in STEM, high demand, and energy-related occupations. WTxEC will provide funding for these post-secondary scholarships to adult learners to enroll in high demand/high pay and STEM training. A minimum of 45 scholarships will be awarded for enrollment in programs at colleges and technical schools in the West Central area.
- In order to help current and future regional employers maintain existing jobs and create new ones, the Workforce Solutions of West Central Texas created the “Workforce Investment Fund” or WIF. This fund is specifically designed to help organizations in any of the 19 counties offset the cost of training current and new employees. The WIF serves only incumbent workers employed by businesses with fewer than 100 workers. To date, three grants have been awarded—one to train FAA Airframe and Power Plant Technicians, one to upgrade caregivers to certified nursing

assistants, and one for a required one year internship for a licensed funeral home director/embalmer.

In the WIOA State Combined Plan, TWC references regional collaborative efforts that extend beyond the currently recognized workforce development areas/regions. One of those collaborations is the partnership between the West Central, Concho Valley, and Permian Basin boards to establish a regional planning group, which became the West Texas Energy Consortium (WTxEC or “the Consortium”) in 2013. The Texas Workforce Commission provided funding to the Consortium to address the needs of the 49-county area served by the three boards, and is now in its third year of funding WTxEC activities. A list of some of those initiatives is provided in section 1.8.

The Board supports entrepreneurship through its long-time support of Springboard, an entrepreneurial program hosted by the Griggs Center for Entrepreneurship and Philanthropy. Springboard is a regional business model competition for aspiring entrepreneurs and existing small businesses in colleges and communities in the 19-county region served by the Board. Founded in 2007, the program allows members of the community a chance to pitch their ideas to local investors for the chance to win thousands of dollars in startup funding and other resources. The competition is also open to existing small businesses needing assistance to grow or expand. Over the last nine years, the competition has awarded more than \$400,000 in winnings to aspiring entrepreneurs. The latest accomplishments of this partnership are:

- The establishment of entrepreneur networks with 218 members
- Launch of an online network for local entrepreneurs
- Creation of a post-competition training program to assist start-up teams with development of their business model and to help prepare them for the next stage of work for their respective businesses
- Expansion of access to the competition by having rural areas host the competitions; five smaller cities in the region had the opportunity to host, in addition to Abilene

The Board’s support for these entrepreneurship initiatives will be ongoing, with funds designated in the Board’s FY17 budget.

2.6 One-Stop Delivery System

A description of the one-stop delivery system in the local area, including explanations of the following:

- a. How the Board will ensure the continuous improvement of eligible providers and how providers will meet the employment needs of local employers, workers, and job seekers;*
- b. How the Board will facilitate access to services provided through the one-stop delivery system, including to remote areas, through the use of technology and other means;*
- c. How entities within the one-stop delivery system, including the one-stop operators and the one-stop partners, will comply with WIOA §188, if applicable, and with applicable provisions of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 regarding the physical and programmatic accessibility of facilities, programs and services, technology, and materials for individuals with disabilities, including providing staff training and support for addressing the needs of individuals who have disabilities; and*
- d. The roles and resource contributions of the one-stop partners.*

Description of System

As previously mentioned, the Board contracts with a subrecipient entity, CECT, to operate the workforce center system, through which core and other program services are provided, including: WIOA Adult, Dislocated Worker, and Youth Programs; Wagner-Peyser Employment Services Program, services to

Unemployment Insurance recipients, TAA, TANF/Choices Program, SNAP E&T Program, and Choices Noncustodial Parent Program. The service delivery system consists of one full-service workforce center in Abilene and three branch offices in Brownwood, Sweetwater and Snyder. The Abilene Workforce Center serves as the hub for the region and, in addition to workforce services, houses staff from the Texas Veterans Commission (TVC), and the Texas Veterans Leadership Program. Staff from Texas Workforce Solutions – Vocational Rehabilitation Services (TWSVRS), and Job Corps also have a regular presence in the center. In addition, workforce staff have an itinerant presence at the adult education location in Abilene.

The workforce subrecipient has primary responsibility for job seeker and employer services. With regard to serving employers, the Board’s model identifies the subrecipient’s role as employer services and the Board’s role as business services. Workforce Center staff involved in serving employers focus on those services related to hiring, assessment, job matching, job referral, job requirements, job postings and assistance related to immediate needs of the business such as prevailing wage rates and screening. The Board’s business service function encompasses industry sectors; economic development; labor market trends; and projected skill needs. The Board’s Business Development Consultant meets regularly with Workforce Center employer service staff to discuss any issues identified as a result of Board interaction with employers and to provide information on emerging issues, events and activities resulting from the Board’s interaction with economic development, business associations, businesses, and/or other community agencies and leaders. These meetings also incorporate a degree of accountability to ensure the Workforce Center employer service staff is meeting the needs of local employers.

The initial contact for most job-seekers is with a Career Specialist in the Triage function. Career Specialists in Triage identify the individual’s reason for contacting the center and provide appropriate information, which may include a referral to a partner agency, a basic overview of services, or referral to a service within the center, and/or referral to a Career Specialist in the Intake function. Job seekers may, depending on their needs, individual circumstances, and eligibility, access basic career services, individualized career services (including services received from programs such as Choices and SNAP E&T), or training services. There is no prescribed pathway for job-seekers to access training services. Some job-seekers enter the center already knowing they want to attend training, while other job-seekers may participate in a variety of other services and activities before they decide to pursue training.

Although the Board sponsors training through ITAs and special initiatives, the actual provision of education and classroom training (“CRT”, which also includes distance learning environments) is conducted by local training providers. The region has three community colleges and one technical college. Among these four entities, training is available in Abilene, Breckenridge, Brownwood, Cisco, Early, Ranger, Snyder and Sweetwater. The Board meets periodically with area community and technical colleges that are capable of meeting employer training needs to provide information on labor market trends, and discuss issues and concerns related to training and workforce preparation. The Board also works closely with businesses to connect them to community/technical colleges or other training providers when a business has identified a training need that the provider is capable of addressing. When an employer, economic development organization or chamber of commerce contacts the Board for training assistance, the Board identifies potential providers and may contact the providers to assess their level of interest, capacity and capability to meet the requested needs.

In WIOA regulations, adult education/literacy (AEL) and vocational rehabilitation services are also core programs. Staff from TWSVRS are provided with space on an itinerant basis at the Abilene center office. This collaboration allows for greater ease of referrals as well as immediate on-site consultations for

workforce customers who may require those services. The Board also has a well-established partnership with Abilene Adult Education (AAE; the AEL provider for the entire West Central area); both entities have a history of collaborating to serve mutual customers. One example of this is a recently concluded project in which the Board and AAE collaborated with 211-A Call for Help to survey customers across the region to determine their knowledge of and satisfaction with services from both workforce and AAE.

Though it is not part of the list of core services under WIOA, child care is nonetheless essential to the success of many parents who work and/or attend school. The Board contracts with a subrecipient, Child Care Associates (CCA) to administer the federally-funded child care program. CCA is co-located with workforce services in Abilene. Additionally, child care staff periodically travel to rural workforce centers to offer childcare services. Workforce and childcare staff meet periodically to discuss shared customers and have established processes for ensuring customer services are coordinated and information is shared, as appropriate.

Access to services in remote areas is accomplished through several methods: itinerant staffing, availability of a toll-free phone number, and technology-facilitated services (these are discussed later in this section). Staff may travel to locations in counties that are not served by a workforce center on a regular basis. In these instances, staff may share space with community agencies that are established and known to the residents, including community centers, libraries, and chambers of commerce. The Abilene Workforce Center's toll-free number is publicized along with the website address to allow customers to access services when staff is not available on-site.

Ensuring Continuous Improvement

The Board believes the services and activities available through subrecipients, as well as from the Board, are effective in addressing local needs; however, the Board believes there is always opportunity for improvement. The Board regularly considers the effectiveness of the service delivery system, the responsiveness of activities, and the impact or outcomes. To this end, the following strategies are employed to regularly evaluate the local system and make improvements. Board staff meets monthly to review performance for all programs and services. While the review primarily focuses on subrecipient performance and financial management, it also includes an assessment of the Board's activities related to oversight, management and technical assistance. Board staff also meets monthly with the local workforce subrecipient management team, and the Board Workforce Contract Manager meets weekly with the subrecipient's Project Director. These meetings are used as an opportunity to review performance, discuss current and planned initiatives, and dialog about issues and opportunities. The workforce subrecipient also hosts regular "partner" meetings that include the childcare subrecipient, as well as other partners. This meeting focuses primarily on operational rather than strategic issues. Additionally, the workforce subrecipient is required to submit monthly reports to the Board Workforce Contract Manager that relate information on issues such as staffing changes, staff training, quality assurance activities, financial status and projections, and emerging issues. Those reports also contain information about the status of performance measures, strategies the subrecipient is using to improve deficiencies, and customer success stories. Formalized methods of ensuring services meet customer needs and are provided appropriately include monitoring reviews of all programs no less often than annually. The Board's Quality Assurance Specialist reviews all proprietary programs at least once per year (and provides an annual report to the Board members for review), and the Board contracts with an external consultant to conduct annual financial reviews. The Board EO Officer reviews program and physical accessibility annually to ensure services and facilities are accessible to individuals with disabilities.

As part of the responsibility to maintain an Eligible Training Provider System, the State and local boards must establish local program performance standards for use in reviewing initial training provider applications and in determining eligibility of a certified program to receive WIOA funds. The Texas Workforce Commission requires local boards to adopt local performance standards that meet or exceed state performance standards, after TWC's annual publication of state performance standards. The Workforce Solutions of West Central Texas Board has adopted TWC's performance standards as the local performance standards and maintains them on the Board's website. The Board periodically reviews program performance via participant training and employment outcomes.

Technology-Facilitated Services

The Board's website has features that facilitate customers' access to information about workforce services, as well as links to partner agencies. Along with many resources, the website provides opportunities for customers to link to WorkInTexas.com and other related sites, ask questions about services, participate in online orientations, apply for services and report changes online (for child care customers) in a secure format, explore the local demand occupations list and the Eligible Training Provider System, and participate in customer satisfaction surveys. The newsflash feature feeds to the local workforce system's Twitter account and Facebook page. The website also allows individuals/organizations to become vendors and receive automatic notification any time the Board posts a bid on the website. Customers may set preferences to be notified when changes or updates occur (such as in the calendar, newsflash, etc.). In addition, hiring events, workshops, etc. are posted to the calendar so customers can receive notification of these events. Events and information are also posted in WIT as a means of communication. The Board has a mobile app through which customers may access website information and services. WTxEC has its own website and is in the process of launching a mobile app as well as a STEM virtual resource center.

In addition, CECT utilizes Transcard debit card services for the disbursement of support services to customers. This enables disbursement of funds in a faster and more efficient manner—funds can be loaded the same day they are requested.

Update:

In October 2018, West Central received a \$352,495 Excellence in Rural Service Delivery grant to fund innovative ways to provide services in the most rural and remote areas of this workforce area. Plans are currently being developed to use those funds for building capacity and promoting awareness of child care and workforce services in rural communities. The primary focus will be on sustainable activities that can be continued through partnerships and/or one-time purchases (technology, software, etc.) that will facilitate/enhance delivery of services/access for customers in rural areas. Service delivery barriers for these areas include: large geographical area to serve, lack of accessible technology in the more rural areas, lack of public transportation, and lack of access to training providers. Some of the strategies currently being explored are:

- Partner with other entities—libraries, community-based organizations, chambers, etc. to serve as information/access points;
- Partner with rural telephone cooperatives/internet providers to expand access to internet;
- Increase social media presence through partnerships—re-posting/sharing of workforce posts, links on other websites; and
- Create testimonial videos using success stories, testimonials, pictures, etc. of local people who use workforce services.

Accessibility

The Board uses many resources for serving individuals with disabilities. In its workforce centers, the Board employs the following assistive devices to help customers with disabilities access job search resources (each device is located in all centers unless otherwise indicated):

- Accessible workstations
- Height adjustable desks and chairs
- Screen Magnifier Software (MAGic)
- Screen Reader Software (JAWS)
- Large print and reverse color keyboards
- 19" monitor
- Headphones
- Trackball mouse
- Speech Amplification System (Pocket Talkers)
- Telephones with volume control and hearing aid compatible
- Video Relay Services (Sorenson)
- Written materials for orientations, workshops, trainings, etc.
- Automatic door openers (Abilene offices)

For customers with hearing impairments, a sign language interpreter service may be used to facilitate communication with individual staff or to allow job search workshops to be conducted with a certified interpreter, enabling those individuals to receive the same information and guidance.

Board EO policies communicate requirements for providing equitable service and ensuring the accessibility of facilities as well as services for individuals with disabilities, including, in part:

- The requirement to provide reasonable accommodations/modifications
- Prohibition on denying customers access to services or benefits on the basis of a disability or the need for a reasonable accommodation
- The requirement to provide services to individuals with disabilities in integrated settings, to the extent possible
- Admittance of service animals
- Use of mobility devices

The Board EO Officer reviews program and physical accessibility annually to ensure services and facilities are accessible to individuals with disabilities, and that subrecipients are in compliance with federal, state, and local EO requirements.

CivicPlus, which hosts the Board's website, ensures the site's compliance with the standards of the Government-wide Section 508 Accessibility Program as well as the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines Working Group.

TWC plans to co-locate Texas Workforce Solutions – Vocational Rehabilitation Services in Workforce Center offices at a future date, however staff from TWSVRS already have an itinerant presence in the Abilene workforce center and have previously made presentations to center staff to educate them on VR services. This collaboration allows for greater ease of referrals as well as immediate on-site consultations for workforce customers who may require those services. In addition, staff periodically receive training for addressing the needs of individuals with disabilities.

Partner Roles and Resource Contributions

The two one-stop partners who have an on-going presence in the center are TVC and TWC—Texas Veterans Leadership Program (TVLP). Both of these partners serve only veterans, but are integrated into the overall operations. One TVC staff and the TVLP employee are housed with workforce staff and have access to the same resources. The other TVC staff, who works primarily with employers, is located with the Employer Services staff and works closely with that unit. Funds are allocated by TWC for the TVLP position and TVC and the Board negotiate an annual budget that covers facilities, support services and supply costs. Other partners who have a presence in the center are only there on an itinerant basis, so those entities do not contribute resources to support the one-stop system.

Update:

TWSVRS staff in Abilene and Brownwood moved into Workforce Center buildings in April and July of 2018, respectively. Abilene VR staff are housed on a separate floor from other Workforce staff, however the cost for their space is included in the Board's rental agreement. TWC contracts funds for rent in the Abilene office as well as other costs for both locations to the Board. The funds contracted for the Brownwood TWSVRS staff have resulted in slightly lower operating costs for the Board, since that building is owned by TWC. However, the Board anticipates having to relocate the entire Brownwood office within the next two years, which will result in higher operating costs.

Child care quality activities that were previously contracted to another entity were brought in-house as a Board-level function in Board Contract Year (BCY) 2017, creating a new Board staff position. This was a result of the Board's contract ending with the provider, as well as additional requirements implemented by TWC. Furthermore, the Board was awarded \$162,000 more in quality funds for BCY2019 than had been awarded in previous years, which allowed the Board to hire a second Child Care Quality Specialist and to increase other quality initiatives. The responsibilities of the Child Care Quality Specialists are:

- planning and managing quality activities, which includes training, mentoring, and technical assistance for Texas Rising Star Providers (TRS),
- assessment of providers seeking TRS certification as well as those desiring continued (advanced) TRS certification,
- maintaining awareness of best practices in child care quality, and
- partnering with other organizations to enhance and expand the availability of quality child care and early learning experiences.

Providing these services as a Board-level function has resulted in reduced costs, closer oversight, and increased collaboration between Child Care Quality Staff, child care providers, and the Board's Child Care Services provider.

2.7 Adult and Dislocated Worker Activities

A description and assessment of the type and availability of adult and dislocated worker employment and training activities in the local area.

WIOA established two levels of services for adults and dislocated workers: career services and training services. Career and training services are available in each of the four office locations: Abilene, Brownwood, Sweetwater, and Snyder. The types of career services established in the Notice of Proposed Rule-Making are basic, individualized, and follow-up.

Basic Career Services

These services are primarily self-help and informational in nature, but may require minimal staff assistance. Basic career services are made available to all job seekers. Customers accessing basic career services at a workforce center will generally receive them in the resource room, where a variety of equipment, information, and services exist to help them find or retain employment. These services include:

- Determination of whether the individual is eligible to receive assistance from the adult, dislocated worker, or youth programs
- Outreach, intake (such as RRES), and orientation to workforce services
- Initial assessment of skill levels (may include the use of fee-based tests)
- Labor exchange services such as:
 - Registration in WorkInTexas (WIT)—new, update, or viewing job postings (alone or with staff assistance)
 - Access to online job search resources
 - Information on in-demand occupations and nontraditional employment
- Labor market information including:
 - Job vacancy listings in labor market areas;
 - Information on job skills necessary to obtain the vacant jobs listed; and
 - Information relating to local occupations in demand and the earnings, skills requirements, and opportunities for advancement in those jobs
- Information on the availability of services such as:
 - Workforce programs
 - Child care
 - Child support
 - Health assistance available through Medicaid and Children’s Health Insurance Program
 - Assistance through the earned income tax credit
 - Assistance from programs administered by HHSC such as Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) and Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)
- Provision of information and assistance regarding filing claims for unemployment compensation
- Information on educational and financial aid resources
- Performance information on
 - Eligible training providers
 - Board and workforce system performance

Individualized Career Services

Individualized career services require staff assistance and go beyond self-service or informational activities. These services must be made available if determined to be appropriate in order for an individual to obtain or retain employment. Customers may receive personal on-going job search assistance from staff through WIOA-funded individualized career services. Those services include:

- Comprehensive and specialized assessment,
- Career planning/development of a Career Development Plan,
- Individual and group counseling,
- Short-term work readiness services,
- Short-term educational activities,
- Internships and work experience that are linked to careers,
- Financial literacy services, and

- Out-of-area job search and relocation assistance (these would currently have to be keyed as “207-other”).

Short-term work readiness activities (also called prevocational services) should prepare a customer for unsubsidized employment. These services may be provided in classrooms or computer labs of Workforce Solutions. They may also be accomplished in a setting outside of the Center. This type of training may be provided in conjunction with other programs, activities and providers in order to accomplish the best mix of services for the customer.

Follow-Up Services

The goal of follow-up services is to ensure job retention, wage gains, and career progress for customers who have obtained unsubsidized employment. Staff may provide assistance to customers who experience difficulty in retaining employment, provide information on new or additional services at Workforce Solutions, and determine the potential need for post-participation support services. Follow-up services could include but are not limited to: additional career planning and counseling; contact with the customer’s employer, including assistance with work-related problems that may arise; peer support groups; information about additional educational opportunities; and referral to or the provision of supportive services.

Training Services

Training services are available for individuals who, after interview, evaluation or assessment, and case management are determined to be unlikely or unable to obtain or retain employment that leads to self-sufficiency or higher wages from previous employment through career services alone. Customers may receive sponsorship for training opportunities, as locally available. Training services may include:

- occupational skills training, including training for nontraditional employment;
- on-the-job training (OJT), as described in WIOA §3(44);
- registered apprenticeship;
- incumbent worker training in accordance with WIOA §134(d)(4);
- workplace training and cooperative education programs;
- private sector training programs;
- skills upgrading and retraining;
- entrepreneurial training;
- job readiness training provided in combination with other training described above;
- adult education and literacy activities, including activities of English language acquisition and integrated education and training programs, in combination with training; and
- customized training.

2.8 Rapid Response Coordination

A description of how the Board will coordinate workforce investment activities carried out in the local area with statewide rapid response activities described in WIOA §134(a)(2)(A).

The Board follows WD Letter 01-10 in administering the Rapid Response Program, including the directive to make contact with employers within 72 hours of receiving notice of a layoff or closure. The Board has adopted the procedures in that letter as the local Board guidelines.

In addition to assisting affected workers during a layoff, the Board also provides services to impacted businesses to help them by identifying Layoff Aversion steps through the Shared Work Program to:

- Better manage human resource needs, reduce Unemployment Insurance costs, and Workers' Compensation Costs during the transition;
- Assist affected employees to return to work and to maintain their standard of living; and
- Demonstrate good corporate citizenship in the community.

The Board's service to businesses is largely accomplished through its Rapid Response Coordinator. The Coordinator is a Board-level single point of contact who works closely with the workforce center subrecipient. As mentioned in section 2.4, the Coordinator establishes contact, by phone or in person, with employers and representatives of affected workers—within 48 hours of receiving a WARN notice, a public announcement of a layoff, or notification that a Trade petition has been filed—to assess employer and employee early intervention needs. Within 72 hours of notification of the layoff event, the Coordinator provides the appropriate notification to TWC and organizes a response team, including subrecipient staff, to provide the following services, as applicable, to the employer and affected workers:

- immediate and on-site contact with the employer—to the extent practical or allowed by the employer—as well as representatives of the affected workers, and the local community;
- guidance and/or financial assistance to establish a labor-management committee voluntarily agreed to by labor and management, or a workforce transition committee comprising representatives of the employer, the affected workers, and the local community that devises and oversees an implementation strategy to respond to the reemployment needs of affected workers;
- emergency assistance adapted to the particular closing, layoff, or disaster;
- development of a coordinated response to the dislocation event;
- state economic development assistance, as needed;
- an orientation on available workforce program services;
- information on and assistance with filing for unemployment insurance (UI) benefits;
- information on Trade services available through Texas Workforce Centers;
- a survey of affected workers' employment, knowledge, skills, and abilities; and
- other services, such as workshops and seminars on tools that will assist with a rapid transition to new employment.

2.9 Youth Activities

A description and assessment of the type and availability of workforce investment activities for youth in the local area, including activities for youth who have disabilities. This description must include an identification of successful models of such activities.

Services for youth are fully integrated into the workforce system. Staff is located in the Abilene office, but may travel and/or coordinate with staff in other offices to make services available in all counties. CECT is currently planning to train a minimum of one staff in each rural office to be able to directly provide all program services. Outreach for youth is conducted through partnerships with other youth-serving entities such as school districts, juvenile justice, city recreation centers, the local ministerial alliance, and foster youth agencies. In particular, the contractor has worked with Communities in Schools, Pregnancy Resources, Noah Project, Goodwill Industries, BCFS, 2-1-1, and the At-Risk Coordinator for Abilene ISD. Services to youth are coordinated, as needed, with partner agencies and include (this is not an all-inclusive list): case management, assessments, referral to community agencies/services, referrals to GED services, training sponsorship, leadership development, support services, and follow-up. The contractor also

provides paid and unpaid work experience activities, which are coordinated between WIOA Youth program staff and ESU staff.

The Board allows use of ITAs for youth however, co-enrollment may occur between WIOA Adult and Youth programs to expand access to training and support services.

The Board participates with Team Workforce, which includes a focus on connecting students to employers through internships and dual-credit CTE courses. Additionally, participating members who are car dealers are currently re-writing the auto technology curriculum for high school students. When it is complete they plan to present it to local schools for adoption.

The Board also works closely with BCFS to serve foster youth (which is partially funded by a Texas Workforce Commission grant). This partnership began when BCFS opened its Abilene Transition Center in 2011. Both entities make referrals to the other based on the needs of the youth and each organization's services.

In recognition of the need to improve services to youth, the Board is conducting meetings with the subrecipient and area service providers to develop ways to more effectively align services. The expected outcome of these meetings is the improvement of services to youth and other individuals with barriers to employment, an increase in customer intake as well as interagency customer referrals, expanded information sharing, and the synchronization of resources among local service entities. Board staff have viewed webinars from the National College Transition Network and World Education highlighting successful models that integrate education, training, and workforce services. Elements of the models presented are a part of the local discussions between the Board and area partners regarding ways to further develop an integrated education and training model.

2.10 Coordination of Secondary and Post-Secondary Education Programs

A description of how the Board will coordinate relevant secondary- and postsecondary-education programs and activities with education and workforce investment activities to coordinate strategies, enhance services, and avoid duplication of services.

The Board is involved with many initiatives that coordinate programs at secondary and post-secondary schools with workforce investment activities. First, as previously mentioned, the Board's Career Pathways program is a three-part initiative designed to encourage high school graduation, improve the transition for youth from school to work or post-secondary education, and promote retention of our future workforce within the region. The first part of this initiative facilitates connections with employers and middle and high school students through Career Day events, which are organized by Board staff. These regional events are held at the civic center and allow students to speak directly with employers from various industries, community college and technical school representatives, and workforce solutions staff. This provides students with a direct opportunity to learn about local industries, available occupations, and the skills/education required for those positions. It also enables students to find out, directly from education providers, the types of training programs that are locally available and the process for application and enrollment. Junior and senior students are also able to participate in mock interviews with professionals from the community. Since the start of the program over 20,500 students from 50 schools in the region have participated in Career Day events.

The second part of this initiative consists of made-to-order presentations conducted by the Career Consultant to students in area elementary, junior high, and high schools. Presentations cover information

on higher education options, employability skills, job search skills, and projections for Board area and statewide jobs. To date, 76 presentations have been made to more than 3,000 area students.

The third part of this initiative involves the development of Career Guides which mirror TEA's 16 career clusters. These guides are one page customizable handouts that highlight high school and local technical/college courses, wage information, as well as the online career assistance tools. These handouts are made available at the Career Days, presentations, Workforce website, and to school personnel when requested.

Another initiative with secondary schools is the Board's coordination of campus visits of the Trailblazer operated by the Texas Alliance for Minorities in Engineering (TAME). This 40-foot one-of-a-kind mobile science museum features exhibits in energy, space, weather, biotechnology, and aerodynamics. It is geared towards engaging students in 3rd-8th grade in the STEM field, and to date over 4,500 students from 28 school districts have participated in the trailer's hands-on engaging exhibits.

Finally, as part of the West Texas Energy Consortium (WTxEC), the Board supports the following initiatives that coordinate secondary and post-secondary education programs.

- WTxEC's planned Family STEM Festivals will promote, inspire and engage youth in Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) activities to introduce children and parents to STEM careers in their local communities. These festivals will fill a critical gap in STEM education, increase access to STEM experiences for all students, and inspire the next generation of STEM professionals.
- WTxEC is planning to launch a career planning mobile app. TxGradU8, the high school degree planning app for Texas 8th-12th graders, is a tool for students and counselors to track Foundation classes and Endorsement classes up to graduation. It meets TEA requirements and complies with House Bill 5 and 18 reporting.
- WTxEC is also launching a virtual STEM resources center housed on the WTxEC website. The E3 Center of Excellence is an online community resource site for students, parents, educators, and industry leaders. This resource hub will provide information on STEM and CTE curriculum, career exploration, and industry trends.
- WTxEC will provide funding to support enrollment of low and moderate income students in dual-credit programs, especially those courses in STEM fields or related to the energy industry. Funding will be provided to local community/technical colleges that provide dual credit courses to local ISDs. Colleges will utilize a scholarship application process to identify students needing financial assistance for tuition, books or other fees necessary for enrollment and participation. A minimum of 60 scholarships will be awarded in the West Central area.

2.11 Provision of Support Services

A description of how the Board will provide transportation, including public transportation, and other appropriate support services in the local area in coordination with WIOA Title I workforce investment activities.

The Board contracts with CECT to administer workforce programs, including WIOA Title I workforce investment activities that provide support services to their customers. These programs are governed by federal and state guidance. In addition, the Board maintains local policies that provide minimum standards and promote safeguards against the misuse of funds. The Board's policy contains provisions that set documentation requirements and other parameters in the provision of support services for all

workforce programs. It also sets parameters for the provision of specific types of support services, including:

- Transportation
 - Gas Money
 - Public Transit
 - Vehicular (including repairs)
- Basic Needs Assistance
- Work-Related Expense Assistance
- Other types of assistance as applicable to the various funding streams

2.12 Wagner-Peyser Services

A description of plans, assurances, and strategies for maximizing coordination, improving service delivery, and avoiding duplication of Wagner-Peyser Act services and other services provided through the one-stop delivery system.

West Central follows the Texas Model, implemented in 2003, for the delivery of Wagner-Peyser/Employment Services. Employment Service (ES) staff are integrated in the workforce center system locally and perform job tasks and functions similar to their locally-employed workforce counterparts. Most ES staff are focused primarily on direct service to employers, with secondary focus on serving job-seeker customers. Daily management and supervision of ES staff is handled by workforce center management, which ensures equity of treatment and responsiveness, and also serves to avoid duplication of Wagner-Peyser services with other one-stop services.

2.13 Adult Education and Literacy Activities

A description of how the Board will coordinate WIOA Title I workforce investment activities with adult education and literacy activities under WIOA Title II. This description must include how the Board will carry out the review of local applications submitted under Title II consistent with WIOA §§107(d)(11)(A) and (B)(i) and WIOA §232.

As mentioned in other sections, the Board has a long-standing partnership with the AEL provider, Abilene Adult Education. The director of AAE has been a member of the Board for several years, and works closely with Board staff as well as the subrecipient staff to coordinate services for mutual customers. Workforce subrecipient staff attend orientations at AAE to recruit potential customers for WIOA Youth Program services; they also meet with ongoing customers periodically at AAE as a convenience for the customer. AAE staff refer their customers to Workforce Solutions if they are in need of services they could potentially receive from Workforce. Conversely, workforce staff refer customers needing adult education services to AAE. Workforce staff also coordinate customer schedules with AAE and employers for those individuals attending AEL classes and participating in work-based learning.

In 2015, the Board was awarded funds to support implementation of regional Workforce and Adult Education integration events. These events were held with regional groups of boards and were attended by staff of those boards, AEL staff, area training providers, and other interested stakeholders. In this area, one of the results of the events (for West Central in particular) was recognition of the need to obtain feedback from individuals across the region regarding their perspective on workforce and AEL services, as well as their barriers to employment. During that timeframe, the Board's Customer Support Committee was also assessing the need for a survey to determine supportive service needs and barriers of area workforce customers. These two projects were then folded into one survey which was completed in early 2016. The primary need for AEL as identified by the survey responses was broader awareness of AEL

services. The primary workforce/support service need identified by participants was training to be able to obtain self-sufficient employment. The Board's Customer Support Committee continues to look at ways to better promote the services of both entities. To this end, Board staff is coordinating with AAE and the workforce subrecipient to include AEL information in packets provided to Rapid Response customers (information about AAE is already provided to customers who attend orientations or individual appointments at the Workforce Center).

In addition, the Board and AAE are currently working with Cisco College to develop an integrated education/training program. This strategy would allow individuals working on a high school equivalency to enroll simultaneously at the college and earn a certificate or degree in a targeted occupation. Students would be enrolled as non-credit or continuing education status until they obtain their high school equivalency. Once they obtain their high school equivalency, they would be eligible to convert hours into credit hours and would also be eligible for federal financial aid. These individuals may be co-enrolled in (and receive sponsorship from) Adult, Dislocated Worker, or Youth-funded programs. They may also be enrolled in Integrated EL Civics and use those funds for training. Job readiness workshops delivered by workforce subrecipient staff are available as needed to these customers. Additionally, Title I customers may be placed with employers in subsidized work experience that may occur during and/or after completion of education and training activities to enhance customers' employability. Overall, the goal is for individuals to complete their education more quickly and enter the workforce or move up to better jobs.

As part of the development of this strategic and operational plan, the AAE Director, among other individuals was invited to provide feedback on the plan and will also participate in upcoming scheduled discussions about youth services.

With regard to applications for AEL services, the Board will identify a review team and implement the review of proposals for the local adult education competition based on Agency guidance.

2.14 Cooperative Agreements

Provide copies of executed cooperative agreements that explain how all local service providers, including additional providers, will carry out the requirements for integration of and access to the entire set of services available in the local one-stop delivery system. includes cooperative agreements (as defined in WIOA §107(d)(11)) between the Board or other local entities described in §101(a)(11)(B) of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (29 U.S.C. 721(a)(11)(B)) and the local office of a designated state agency or designated state unit that administers programs that are carried out under Title I of the Rehabilitation Act (29 U.S.C. 720 et seq.) (other than §112 or part C of that title (29 U.S.C. 732, 741) and are subject to §121(f)) in accordance with §101(a)(11) of the Rehabilitation Act (29 U.S.C. 721(a)(11)) with respect to efforts that will enhance the provision of services to individuals who have disabilities and to other individuals, such as cross training of staff, technical assistance, use and sharing of information, cooperative efforts with employers, and other efforts.

No response to this element is required, per email from TWC on 1/3/17.

2.15 Fiscal Agent

An identification of the entity responsible for the disbursement of grant funds described in WIOA §107(d)(12)(B)(i)(III), as determined by the CEOs or the governor under WIOA §107(d)(12)(B)(i).

The Board contracts with Region XIV Education Service Center, located at 1850 Hwy 351, in Abilene to provide fiscal agent services, which includes disbursement of grant funds and payroll and benefit administration for Board staff. Region XIV provides fiscal management services for the workforce subrecipient as well.

2.16 Subrecipient Award Process

A description of the competitive process that will be used to award the sub-grants and contracts for WIOA Title I activities.

The Board contracts with procured service providers for the provision of workforce and child care services using the following procurement process.

- Develop an RFP based on the requirements of the FMGC, request notice of intent letters, offer the opportunity to ask questions and provide answers to potential bidders.
- The RFP is posted on the Board’s website and notices are automatically sent to all interested vendors through the website. Typical timeline allows 8 to 10 weeks for response.
- Responses are reviewed by external evaluators.
- Recommendations are developed and presented to the Executive Committee; a final decision is made by Board vote.

RFP documents are designed to ensure fair competition for a variety of management models, including managing director, private consultants and corporations and allow for contracting with an entity for up to four years, based on the Board’s discretion of whether to renew the contract. Typically, the Board reconsiders the contract after the first year with a new provider, and then extends the contract for an additional one to two years based on performance for up to two additional terms, not to exceed a total of four years. The Board’s subrecipients may directly hire staff or may subcontract with a professional employment entity to hire staff to provide services. The Board’s competitive process complies with the procurement requirements in the TWC FMGC and in the Agency-Board Agreement.

2.17 Performance Expectations

A description of the local levels of performance negotiated with TWC and the CEOs consistent with WIOA §116(c), to be used to measure the performance of the local area and to be used by the Board for measuring the performance of the local fiscal agent (where appropriate), eligible providers under WIOA Title I subtitle B, and the one-stop delivery system in the local area.

The following WIOA performance targets have been contracted to the Board. These are subsequently contracted to the workforce subrecipient.

| Measure | Proposed Target | Current Performance |
|--|-----------------|---------------------|
| Employed Q2 Post Exit - Adult | 77.6% | 77.27% |
| Employed Q4 Post Exit – Adult | 69.3% | 78.57% |
| Median Earnings Q2 Post Exit – Adult | \$4090.00 | \$6375.80 |
| Credential Rate – Adult | 78.1% | 75% |
| Employed Q2 Post Exit – DW | 71.7% | 75% |
| Employed Q4 Post Exit – DW | 60.2% | 20% |
| Median Earnings Q2 Post Exit – DW | \$7140.00 | \$6293.42 |
| Credential Rate – DW | 54.6% | NA |
| Employed/Enrolled Q2 Post Exit - Youth | 63.8% | 73.33% |
| Employed/Enrolled Q4 Post Exit - Youth | 60.5% | 61.54% |
| Credential Rate – Youth | 47.6% | 33.33% |

2.18 Performance Strategies

A description of the actions the Board will take toward becoming or remaining a high-performing Board.

TWC evaluates Board performance based on contracted measures (as mentioned in the previous section). Where these standards of evaluation are concerned, the Board believes it has performed very well. As reflected in the table below, the Board met or exceeded roughly 90% of its contracted performance measures for the last three years.

| Year | # Failed | # Met | # Exceeded | # Total |
|-------|----------|-------|------------|---------|
| BCY16 | 1 | 6 | 2 | 9 |
| BCY15 | 0 | 7 | 2 | 9 |
| BCY14 | 0 | 6 | 4 | 10 |

TWC communicated BCY17 WIOA proposed performance targets to all of the boards in January 2017 as noted in section 2.17. The Board is currently meeting or exceeding seven out of the eleven WIOA measures (with an additional measure that currently does not have any customers in the data set, so it is neither meeting nor failing). The Board is also meeting or exceeding all of the other three workforce performance measures.

TWC also evaluates Board performance through annual monitoring reviews that result in a report detailing any policy violations or other issues found. In the last three years, TWC has only identified one finding, which occurred in 2014. TWC did not identify any findings in 2015 or 2016.

To maintain high levels of performance, the Board regularly considers the effectiveness of the service delivery system, the responsiveness of activities, and the impact or outcomes. Board staff meets monthly to review performance for all programs and services. While the review primarily focuses on contractor performance and financial management, it also includes an assessment of the Board's activities related to oversight, management and technical assistance. Board staff also actively engages the subrecipient on all aspects of onestop service delivery. Board staff meets monthly with the local workforce subrecipient management team, and the Board Workforce Contract Manager meets weekly with the contractor's Project Director. These meetings are used as an opportunity to review performance, discuss current and planned initiatives, and dialog about issues and opportunities. CECT is already aware of the three WIOA targets that West Central is missing and is taking steps to correct those. The workforce center subrecipient also hosts regular "partner" meetings that include the childcare subrecipient, as well as other partners. This meeting focuses primarily on operational rather than strategic issues. Additionally, the workforce contractor is required to submit monthly reports to the Board Workforce Contract Manager that relate information on issues such as staffing changes, staff training, quality assurance activities, financial status and projections, and emerging issues. Those reports also contain information about the status of performance measures, strategies the contractor is using to improve deficiencies, and customer success stories.

While providing subrecipient oversight is a key strategy for being a high-performing board, the Board uses other strategies as well to positively impact the job-seekers, employers, and overall community of the West Central Texas area. Some of those strategies include: involvement with economic development entities, responsiveness to employers' needs, and willingness to apply for and use additional grants (above and beyond formula funds) for the benefit of the region. The examples below demonstrate the Board's willingness to take these types of actions as a high-performing board.

- Board staff have been involved with Team Workforce, an initiative of the Abilene Chamber of Commerce to attract, retain and grow the area workforce. Team Workforce includes local business owners, economic development, educators from local schools as well as colleges and universities, elected officials and workforce as part of 40+ member team as well as a virtual team of 75+ individuals who provide input through an on-line idea-sharing portal.
- The Board re-launched the Workforce Investment Fund in late 2015, with a requirement to serve only incumbent workers employed by businesses with fewer than 100 workers. To date, three grants have been awarded—one to train FAA Airframe and Power Plant Technicians, one to upgrade caregivers to certified nursing assistants, and one for a required one year internship for a licensed funeral home director/embalmer. The Board uses local area designated funds to support this project.
- The Board partnered with the Development Corporation of Abilene, Abilene ISD and Cisco College on a High Demand Job Training grant to provide equipment and expand training to build the pipeline of young workers entering employment in heating and refrigeration, electrical trades, and industrial maintenance.
- The Board applied for and recently received a National Dislocated Worker Grant (NDWG) to provide reemployment and training services to dislocated workers, above and beyond services available through formula funds.
- For three consecutive years, the Board has partnered with boards from Concho Valley and Permian Basin to create and maintain the West Texas Energy Consortium. WTxEC addresses the STEM and energy sector needs of the 49 counties covered by these three boards. To fund the consortium, the three boards applied for Wagner-Peyser 3b funds. West Central took a lead role in this initiative by agreeing to be the grant recipient and administrator, and was responsible for preparing the grant application for the first year. West Central also has oversight of the two consortium staff.

In recognition of its efforts to provide excellent quality service while meeting the needs of targeted customer groups, the Board has received several awards over the last few years.

- October 2014:
 - Texas Economic Development Council: Workforce Excellence Award – Regional
- November 2014:
 - Performance Incentive – WIA Adult and DW Training Related Employment (15k)
 - Industry Sector Outreach – West Texas Energy Consortium (in conjunction with Permian Basin and Concho Valley (10k)
- December 2014:
 - Texas Veterans Commission – Local Workforce Board of the Year
- December 2016:
 - TWC Service to Community Award
 - TWC Youth Inspiration and Career Awareness Award

2.19 Provision of Training

A description of how training services outlined in WIOA §134 will be provided through the use of Individual Training Accounts (ITAs), including, if contracts for training services will be used, how the use of such contracts will be coordinated with the use of ITAs under that chapter, and how the Board will ensure informed customer choice in the selection of training programs, regardless of how the training services are to be provided.

Training services are provided through Individual Training Accounts (ITAs) for individuals who, after interview, evaluation or assessment, and case management are determined to be unlikely or unable to obtain or retain employment that leads to self-sufficiency or higher wages from previous employment through career services alone. At this time the Board is opting to not use contracts for training services. The customer must be determined to be in need of training services and to possess the skills and qualifications to successfully participate in the selected program. Requirements for receiving training services include:

- Determination of eligibility for DW or Adult priority-funded groups,
- A complete assessment of skills, abilities, aptitudes, and barriers;
- Development of a Career Development Plan; and
- Documentation in case notes regarding the need and justification for providing training services and that the customer meets the following requirements:
 - the training institution's enrollment stipulations (such as an acceptance letter),
 - pre-requisites for the training program,
 - support systems needed for successful completion,
 - an inability to obtain sufficient grant assistance from other sources to pay the full costs of training, and
 - additional funding needed, if the ITA will not finance all training costs.

As part of the assessment discussion staff review local labor market information and training options to enable the customer to make the most informed choice possible.

Staff assist customers in navigating the Eligible Training Provider System as part of the process for researching and choosing the training program that best addresses their needs. Staff must also provide performance and cost information relating to Eligible Training Providers. Staff may conduct a search for all providers in this workforce area and/or narrow the search to indicate a specific training program, training provider, or occupation. All WIOA customers desiring financial training assistance through an ITA must select a training program from the ETPS. WIOA funds may not be expended for training programs until the program is certified by TWC for inclusion on the Statewide List. The customer is free to choose the training program/entity, provided that it:

- Offers the course they have been approved to attend,
- Is geographically appropriate in terms of their needs,
- Accepts them for study, and
- Offers the most overall cost-effective training for that individual.

To assist customers in researching providers and comparing related information, a desk aid is available listing all approved programs, the target occupations for which they train, as well as other related information.

It is the Board's policy to provide training sponsorship primarily for programs offered in the Workforce Solutions of West Central Texas area. Per state and federal regulations, individuals may select training programs from any area on the Statewide List. However, training services will only be provided for programs related to the Board's target occupations list or the target occupations list for another workforce area to which the customer is willing to commute or relocate.

Case notes must document staff efforts for helping the customer to make an informed choice and include the rationale for selecting the training program.

2.20 Role of Technology

A description of how one-stop centers are implementing and transitioning to an integrated, technology-enabled intake and case management information system for programs carried out under WIOA and by one-stop partners.

The Board and its subrecipients use TWC automated systems, which encompass case management, job matching, data collection/reporting, and financial reporting. For example, the two primary systems are:

- TWIST, which is the state integrated intake, eligibility, case management, and reporting system for WIOA and other onestop programs.
- WorkInTexas.com, which is the state labor exchange system whereby employers may enter and run matches for their job openings, and job seekers may enter and run matches for their own applications.

In addition to state-mandated systems, the Board has implemented the use of a file management database, Docubase, across subrecipients in all offices to eliminate paper waste, preserve the confidentiality of customer information, and facilitate the maintenance of all customer files in one efficient location. Docubase is an electronic document management system that captures, manages, and stores documents and data. The workflow portion allows for the creation, management, and tracking of tasks, improving internal administrative efficiency and services to customers. Using Docubase allows staff across offices to access all file information, and also allows remote access by authorized users outside the region (for example, off-site monitors).

2.21 Adult Priority of Services

The Board policy to ensure that priority for adult individualized career services and training services will be given to recipients of public assistance, other low-income individuals, and individuals who are basic skills deficient, consistent with WIOA §134(c)(3)(E) and §680.600 of the Final Regulations.

The following is the Board's policy for ensuring that priority for adult individualized career and training services will be given to recipients of public assistance, other low-income individuals, and individuals who are basic skills deficient, consistent with WIOA §134(c)(3)(E) and §680.600 of the Final Regulations.

In order for customers to receive individualized career services (or training services), they must meet either Dislocated Worker (DW) eligibility, or basic eligibility and criteria for one of the Adult priority groups. DW eligibility requirements are located in the TWC WIOA Guidelines. Adult basic eligibility requirements are:

- Age 18 or older,
- Authorization to work in the U.S. as a citizen or noncitizen, and
- Selective service registration requirements (males only).

The Adult priority groups include:

- Public assistance recipients,
- Other low-income adults,
- Individuals who are basic skills deficient, or
- Individuals with a disability.

For individualized career or training services, staff will first determine if the customer is in one of the WIOA priority groups. Customers will initially be prioritized according to whether they meet criteria for one of the 3 WIOA Adult priority groups—low income, public assistance, or basic skills deficient. Since the Board’s additional priority group, individuals with a disability, is not a WIOA-mandated priority, those individuals would be subsequent to anyone in the first 3 priority groups. Following this determination, staff will make services available in this order:

1. Eligible veterans (first) and eligible foster youth (second) who are also in the low income, public assistance, or basic skills deficient priority groups;
2. Other individuals who are low income, receiving public assistance, or basic skills deficient;
3. Eligible veterans (first) and eligible foster youth (second) who have a disability; and
4. Other individuals who have a disability.

2.22 ITA Limitations

Boards may impose limits on the duration and amount of ITAs. If the state or Board chooses to do so, the limitations must be described in the Local Plan, but must not be implemented in a manner that undermines WIOA’s requirement that training services are to be provided in a manner that maximizes customer choice in the selection of an Eligible Training Provider. Exceptions to ITA limitations may be provided for individual cases and must be described in Board policies.

The following information is the Board’s policy for limiting the duration and amount of ITAs.

Customers may not be sponsored for training programs more than two (2) years in length (students enrolling in a 2-year program who require additional time to complete courses due to unforeseen circumstances may continue to be sponsored), and the ITA may not exceed \$9000. Exceptions to this limit may be made on a case-by-case basis, with the approval of the Project Director. Customers must also maintain a full course schedule of at least 12 hours. Under special circumstances, the individual may obtain permission from staff to take less than 12 hours. This is given if, for example, the school offers insufficient courses or if the student is working full-time. In addition, no more than 60% of the ITA may be expended in the first year.

2.23 Youth Design Framework

A description of the design framework for youth programs in the local area, and how the 14 program elements required in §681.460 of the Final Regulations are to be made available within that framework.

All of the information following this paragraph provides the current design framework for youth* services, and how the subrecipient presently addresses the 14 program elements. The Board has determined there are gaps in this design, and is therefore working with CECT to make changes. The Board is conducting meetings with community service providers to develop ways to more effectively align services and to also set up a youth advisory council. CECT is utilizing an outside expert to facilitate development of an action plan for implementation of the new program design.

*Note: The Board refers to the youth program as “young adult”, and will use that terminology throughout the remainder of this section.

The subrecipient offers a program designed in-house called “Work Ready Program”. It is an employability skills training program that focuses on the basic skills needed to obtain and retain employment. The young adult begins by taking part in an intense one-week class in which topics such as labor market trends, resume writing, interviewing skills, dressing for success, etc. are covered, as well as financial literacy, an overview

of entrepreneurship, and activities that provide an opportunity for teamwork, leadership skills and community involvement. After the week-long workshop is completed, the young adult is placed in a 4+ week paid internship with a non-profit organization. The internship is intended to provide young adults with the opportunity to practice and improve their employability skills. After the young adult has demonstrated they are job-ready, they are moved into a 5+ week subsidized work experience that will potentially result in full-time employment. The subrecipient addresses the 14 elements as listed below.

1. Tutoring—All young adults take the TABE to determine educational needs. If deficiencies present themselves, remediation is scheduled into the curriculum to allow for tutoring in those areas. A post-TABE is administered to determine if further improvement is needed. CECT also partners with AEL to ensure all young adults who do not have a diploma or GED are enrolled and begin classes to work towards that goal. Online tutoring services are utilized as well if needed.
2. Alternative secondary school—Young adults lacking a diploma or GED are co-enrolled with AEL.
3. Paid and unpaid work experiences—All young adults move to a paid internship following the week-long course. Internships last 4 weeks and then young adults move into a 5+ week paid work experience or OJT that is intended to lead to full-time employment.
4. Occupational skill training—Any young adult interested in vocational training, either short-term or long term, is evaluated and if funding is available may be offered a scholarship. Funding may come from co-enrollment with other programs or through other means.
5. Education offered concurrently with and in the same context as workforce preparation activities—Education and occupational training is addressed in the same manner.
6. Leadership development opportunities—The curriculum allows for a service project on Day 5 which teaches team work, leadership and community involvement.
7. Supportive services—Support services are available to all young adults as determined on an individual basis.
8. Adult mentoring—Mentoring is a partnership between the work experience coordinator, the Career Specialist and the on-site supervisor during the internship.
9. Follow-up services—12 month follow-up by a Career Specialist is required.
10. Comprehensive guidance and counseling—Through case management with the Career Specialists and the course curriculum, a young adult may be counseled in a variety of areas. If mental health or substance abuse is a concern, referrals and partnerships with Betty Hardwick services and/or DARS may be utilized.
11. Financial literacy education—The entire morning of Day 3 is dedicated to education on financial literacy.
12. Entrepreneurial skills training—Throughout the program, especially on Day 1, setting goals for long-term career paths are required. If a young adult expresses interest in entrepreneurial endeavors, further exploration into options and referrals to the Small Business Development Center can be made. The Board is also currently exploring opportunities with Springboard to connect young adults to local entrepreneurs as possible mentors or for placements in internships.
13. Labor market and employment information—Labor Market is explored in depth on Day 1 of the curriculum.
14. Preparation for and transition to postsecondary education—Throughout the program, setting short and long-term goals to achieve a higher desired career path is encouraged. Preparing for occupational training or education is encouraged by the Career Specialist. In addition, the Development Corporation of Abilene is partnering with Communities in Schools to hire an individual to serve as a transition counselor at Cisco College and TSTC for students enrolling in career and technical education training.

2.24 Registered Apprenticeship

A description of how the Board will encourage Registered Apprenticeship programs in its area to register with the eligible training provider system in order to receive WIOA funding.

The Board is not aware of any such programs at this time. However, as has been done in the past, invitations will be extended to regional representatives of apprenticeship programs to conduct presentations to staff and employer groups. In recent presentations, apprenticeship representatives have outlined program benefits to employers.

2.25 Apprenticeship Texas

A description of the Board's strategy and commitment to support ApprenticeshipTexas efforts across the state, as applicable.

The Board is not aware of any such programs at this time. However, as has been done in the past, invitations will be extended to regional representatives of apprenticeship programs to conduct presentations to staff and employer groups. In recent presentations, apprenticeship representatives have outlined program benefits to employers.

3.1 Public Comment

A description of the process used by the Board, consistent with WIOA §108(d), to provide a 30-day public comment period before submission of the plan, including an opportunity to have input into the development of the Local Plan, particularly for representatives of businesses, education, and labor organizations. Comments submitted during the public comment period that represent disagreement with the plan must be submitted with the Local Plan.

A notice of the availability of the plan was published in the Abilene Reporter News, the regional newspaper, on Monday, January 28, 2019. The notice indicated that the draft plan would be discussed at the Board meeting on Wednesday, February 20, 2019. The Board provides an opportunity for public comments at every regular meeting.

- i. Date of publication – January 28, 2019
- ii. Final date of 30-day comment period – February 26, 2019
- iii. Name and address of publication: Abilene Reporter News, 101 Cypress, Abilene, Texas 79601
- iv. Date of public hearing – February 20, 2019
- v. Interested parties could obtain a copy of the plan by calling or sending an e-mail to the Board's designated contact person.
- vi. Written comments could be submitted electronically, via fax or delivered via mail or in person to the Board offices at 500 Chestnut, Ste. 1200 in Abilene.

A notice of the availability of the plan was also published on the Board's website and was posted to Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and LinkedIn.

No comments were received about the Board's plan from any parties.

The plan update was approved by a vote of the full Board on February 20, 2019. It was also approved by a vote of the Board's Chief Elected Officials Workforce Committee on March 1, 2019.

Texas Workforce Investment Council Requirements

Part 1—Demonstrating Alignment with Texas’ Strategic Plan for the Workforce System

The four sections below list and describe the four system goals from The Texas Workforce System Strategic Plan FY 2016–FY 2023 that identify critical, high-priority system issues. For each goal, provide a detailed description of one significant board strategy or initiative that both fulfills the intent of the goal and that could be considered a best or promising practice. Also, include the anticipated quantitative outcomes to be achieved as a result of implementation.

4.1.1 Focus on Employers

By accessing critical education and labor data sets, employers can better find and plan for skilled workers to meet their needs in both the immediate timeframe and the future. Through greater engagement with employers, education and training providers can better design career and technical education content and delivery options that are more aligned with industry needs. Providers can make adjustments in program content to benefit employers and students, as well as address both state and regional economic needs.

Strategy:

The Board is currently working with area partners to implement regional industry sector partnerships with manufacturers and healthcare providers. Employers in these sectors will be brought together to share needs and issues. Partnerships will focus on employers as central drivers with support provided by partners from economic development, higher education, secondary education and workforce. The goal is to provide an opportunity to hear from employers regarding their specific needs and then work toward training alignment to meet those needs.

Outcomes:

- Engagement among employers and between employers and supporting partners.
- Identification of common challenges that employers are willing to address collectively.
- Develop inventory of existing resources and identify gaps and/or areas needing revision to better align with employer requirements.

Update:

The healthcare partnership is still under consideration, however the manufacturing partnership has progressed significantly. Consisting of manufacturers from 5 counties, the partnership renamed itself the “Big Country Manufacturing Alliance” (BCMA), and created an action plan to address the following high priority areas.

1. School Partnerships—members are exploring the possibility of hosting facility tours for students, parents, and school personnel.
2. Business-to-Business Connections—members are discussing how to build in opportunities for purposeful networking during the partnership meetings and how to expand the membership with a “bring one” campaign.

The value of BCMA is its ability to communicate needs as a single voice to support partners, identify education and training needs, build relationships between manufacturers, and highlight manufacturing capabilities in this workforce area. BCMA has created an organization structure for leadership and has elected a Board of Directors. As a result of its progress, BCMA is the first recognized NextGen Manufacturing Partnership in Texas. Two key next steps have been identified for the partnership and include:

- Seek additional grants and funding to support BCMA. Should members pay a fee, generate money through events, seek funding—what are opportunities that will be of benefit to members without being a strain/drain on members financially.
- Develop additional networking opportunities. This may occur at quarterly meetings, happy hour or social networking events, or events such as an area trade show, where manufacturers and suppliers can connect.

BCMA has also created a logo and is developing a standalone website funded with outside grant funds. The website will be launched in the first quarter of 2019.

4.1.2 Engage in Partnerships

Through collaborative and transparent processes, workforce system partners focus on outcomes that improve the employability of all program participants—from across a wide spectrum of capabilities and experiences—to meet employer needs. The leveraging of partnerships to enhance system alignment and outcomes depends on trust, a culture of collaboration both within and external to the workforce system, deep working relationships, and technical capacity to communicate to share needs, data, and information. Partnerships can provide for common planning, intake, and reporting on outcomes, as well as ensuring a “no wrong door” approach to the provision of workforce programs and services.

Strategy:

The Board actively engages in existing collaboratives that bring together partners who share common customers with the workforce system. One example of this is participation by Board and subrecipient staff (from both workforce and child care entities) in the Basic Needs Network (BNN). Hosted by 2-1-1, the BNN is a regional consortium of resource agencies covering the same service delivery area as the Board area that provide assistance for various types of needs. Board staff also participates on the Regionally Coordinated Transportation Plan committee, which considers transportation needs and resources across the region, including the 5310 federal funding for the elderly and individuals with a disability. In addition, Board staff participates in the Military Partnership of West Central Texas, which hosts annual events for veterans. Collaboration with these entities promotes sharing of information about resources, needs, and opportunities; helps to ensure, to the extent possible, that internal services are not duplicative of those provided by other organizations; and enables the Board to align its service strategies with those of partner entities.

The Board also engages partners to provide feedback on design and delivery of workforce services. One example of this is that the Board is conducting meetings with the workforce subrecipient and area service providers to develop ways to more effectively align services for youth. The initial meeting has already generated interest in the creation of a youth advisory committee.

Outcomes:

- Increase number of referrals among partners to more effectively leverage resources
- Explore coordinated case management of shared customers
- Establish a forum for regular communication among partners who serve disconnected youth that also includes participation by parents and youth.

Update:

In addition to Board engagement with community partners, the Board has now made partnerships a subaward requirement for the workforce subrecipient. The subrecipient is required to intentionally and fervently seek engagement with other community partners, including organizations that deal with

homelessness, mental health issues, disability services, and other issues that impact our customers. Specific pay-points are built into the subaward to ensure the completion of a community engagement plan that results in no less than 90% of staff coordinating with partner entities in the course of providing comprehensive services to workforce system customers. Subaward requirements for community engagement include the following.

1. The subrecipient must develop a plan for engagement of community partners, to include a list of partners to be engaged, as well as a list of services each of those partners provide. The plan must include measurable, objective criteria for successful partnerships to include useful referral mechanisms and strategies to reduce redundant services between partners. Community partner engagement efforts must be region-wide and not limited to Abilene only.
2. The subrecipient must design a quarterly reporting mechanism to ensure the plan is working effectively. The subrecipient must contact each community partner and conduct a meeting with relevant partners and a good cross-section of staff by quarter end.
3. The subrecipient must submit quarterly reports that demonstrate adherence to the plan.
4. The subrecipient must continue engagement efforts, meet objective requirements in the plan, and document adherence in the quarterly report. The final summary report must record successes and opportunities for improvement.

As of the writing of this update, the subrecipient has submitted a plan that outlines the following goals:

- Raise awareness of Workforce Solution’s resources and services available to all customers and community partners
- Increase community coordination and provide information that will engage and entice customers and partners to utilize these services
- Communicate and begin to strategize new ways to reduce redundant services being provided between partners who share the same customer base
- Ensure that we are encouraging staff to become customer advocates rather than case managers; thus, ensuring we are providing all customers with the highest level of customer service

The plan contains:

- A partnership matrix that lists area entities and shows services provided, service area, meeting information, point of contact, and planned activities to engage each entity; and
- A list of various actions that include staff training, an updated interagency referral procedure, and engagement of staff in outreach and partnership efforts.

The goal and purpose for this push is to ensure staff are doing everything that is necessary and practical to ensure the successful completion of training and/or job placement and retention such that customers are well served and performance is positively affected. Additionally, this plan should reduce redundancy in services provided by the partnership entities and should increase referrals between partners. By referring and coordinating services with other community partners, more customer barriers will be addressed leading to more success for our customers.

4.1.3 Align System Elements

By improving transitions, aligning programs, and ensuring portability and transferability, Texas improves access and the ability of all participants to complete programs of study, earn credentials, transition to further education, and gain critical employability skills. Texas employers are better positioned to find and hire the employees they need through an enhanced education and training pipeline.

Strategy:

The Board currently supports dual-credit career and technical education for secondary students. Through its partnership with the WTxEC, the Board is in its third year of providing funding to support enrollment of low and moderate income students in dual-credit programs, especially those courses in STEM fields or related to the energy industry. Funding is provided to local community/technical colleges that provide dual credit courses to local ISDs. Colleges utilize a scholarship application process to identify students needing financial assistance for tuition, books or other fees necessary for enrollment and participation.

The Board also supports work-based internships for secondary and post-secondary students through the WIOA Youth Program. At present, young adults receive assistance with work readiness and retention skills, followed by a paid internship. Upon successful completion of the internship, the individual is transitioned to a paid work experience or OJT position, which is intended to lead to full-time employment. In addition, Board staff participate in Team Workforce, an initiative of the Abilene Chamber of Commerce to attract, retain and grow the area workforce. Team Workforce includes local business owners, economic development, educators from local schools as well as colleges and universities, elected officials and workforce as part of 40+ member team as well as a virtual team of 75+ individuals who provide input through an on-line idea-sharing portal. Among its other objectives, one focus of Team Workforce is connecting students to employers through internships and dual-credit CTE courses.

Finally, the Board is promoting establishment of integrated education and training programs that allow adult students to obtain high school credentials simultaneously with industry-recognized certifications. Through its partnership with WTxEC, the Board is providing funding for post-secondary scholarships to adult learners to enroll in high demand/high pay and STEM training. The Board is also connecting with AEL to explore partnerships with regional community colleges to provide dual credit opportunities for AEL students, followed by internships with employers to facilitate successful employment and self-sufficiency.

Outcomes:

- Increase number of secondary students enrolled in dual-credit career and technical education classes.
- Provide work-based internships for a minimum of 25 youth each year.
- Establish at least one integrated education and training program that is a collaborative project of adult education, post-secondary education and workforce.

Update:

The Board continues to support dual-credit career and technical education for secondary students, work-based internships for secondary and post-secondary students, and integrated education and training programs. West Central was one of six workforce boards awarded a \$92,998 Texas Talent Connection grant in April 2018 to create middle-skill STEM internship programs for students in five key industry sectors in the region: agricultural, construction, energy, manufacturing, and automotive services. These sectors include a significant number of middle-skill STEM occupations that offer growth opportunities and good wages. Secondary and post-secondary providers in the region offer education and training programs that allow students to earn dual-credit industry-recognized certifications aligned with these sectors. The internship model is unique in that it encompasses four ISDs (independent school districts) in four different communities across three counties that include 1A (Roscoe Early College High School), 4A (Snyder and Sweetwater ISDs) and 6A (Abilene ISD) UIL classification schools and three post-secondary providers that include two community and one technical college.

4.1.4 Improve and Integrate Programs

Accelerate employment and improve efficiencies through shared resources that can be leveraged to create new, relevant, and innovative opportunities that serve the needs of all stakeholders. By addressing high-priority programmatic needs through an integrated strategy, decision-making at the system, partner, and participant levels is improved and system service delivery is enhanced. The changing economic and educational landscapes provide opportunities to share relevant data through appropriate “push” mechanisms in an organized manner to key stakeholders who rely on information generated by system partners.

Strategy:

For the delivery of workforce services, the Board requires the use of a function-based approach that focuses on customer needs rather than programmatic requirements. Funding from the workforce programs is funneled into a recently developed service delivery structure that engages staff according to their strengths and aptitudes rather than assigning them all of the tasks that need to be performed in a linear case management model. The Board believes that serving (and perceiving) customers according to their needs results in more successful outcomes for them. To this end, the Board has been working with the previous and current subrecipients to design a function-based service delivery structure that optimizes staff strengths and focuses on addressing customers’ needs.

The Board procured an outside consultant to assist the subrecipient with developing tools and resources needed for implementation. At the time this plan is being written, CECT is in the process of implementing the new structure. Essentially, job seekers are served as follows (staff in these functional units are trained to serve customers across program lines).

- The Job Attainment unit is responsible for working with customers seeking assistance in the resource room. The staff in this unit provide job matching services for customers seeking employment. Staff helps customers complete online applications and update their WIT portfolios to ensure good matches. They show customers online career exploration tools. They help customers brush up their application and resume skills, and boost their confidence in finding a job. This unit is also responsible for providing labor market information and other local job-related information to customers. Staff may also refer customers to other staff in the Center or outside resources as appropriate.
- The Intake unit is responsible for interviewing customers interested in services beyond those provided in the resource room. Intake staff listen to what the customer tells them and assesses work history, skills, education level, job search skills and support needs. Once this general assessment is complete, Intake staff determine next steps which may include a variety of actions:
 - Referral to outside resources for services not provided by Workforce Solutions
 - Gathering documents and information to determine eligibility for WIOA funds
 - Verifying eligibility for Choices and SNAP E&T programs
 - Conducting orientations
 - Determining with the customer the best course of action, which could include referral to other units for customized services:
 - ✓ Job Attainment
 - ✓ Training
 - ✓ Career Counseling
- The Career Counseling unit is responsible for working with customers who have been determined eligible for certain Workforce Solutions programs, but who are primarily interested in receiving intensive help to find a job. Staff in this unit work with customers to help them find a job and meet any programmatic requirements they may have. They conduct comprehensive needs

assessments, identify barriers to work and/or school and – together with the customer – develop employment plans with long-term goals. They leverage internal and external resources to provide customer support, track progress, and write counselor notes.

- The Training Unit works with education and training institutions to understand programs of study, enrollment requirements, costs, and expected outcomes. They share this information with customers interested in training and provide career advice. The Training unit schedules assessments as needed and analyzes results; they interview customers about suitability for training, potential barriers, and support needs; they use the ETPS and target occupations list to make recommendations, develop employment plans, create ITAs for training sponsorship, communicate with training institutions; provide ongoing services to customers; and conduct post-employment entry follow-up.

Employers are served by the subrecipient’s Employer Services Unit (ESU), which provides assistance related to hiring, assessment, job matching, job referral, job requirements, job postings and assistance related to immediate needs of the business such as prevailing wage rates and screening. ESU staff may also be called upon to make presentations to employers, economic development entities, partner agencies, and job seeker groups. They also develop subsidized employment/paid work experience agreements with private employers as well as non-profit/community resource entities. To better reflect this expanded role, the Employer Services Unit is being renamed to the Partner Relations Unit. This new name will also demonstrate that staff focus more on building relationships with employers rather simply promoting workforce services to them.

Another strategy is the sharing of data collected through industry sector partnerships with other support partners. As mentioned in section 4.1.1, the Board is playing an integral role in implementing regional industry sector partnerships with manufacturers and healthcare providers. The Board also collaborates with various other employer, education, and economic development groups, and is well-positioned to be a conduit for the information obtained from sector meetings.

Finally, one of the Board’s fundamental roles is the provision of local labor market information to key stakeholders. Through its involvement with the business community and its access to data via TWC’s Labor Market and Career Information, as well as use of other resources such as Chmura, the Board maintains an understanding of the labor market conditions and needs of industry sectors in West Central. As a result, the Board is a “go-to” resource for employers and economic development entities needing labor market information. The Board is now exploring ways to make the delivery of this information more structured through regular labor market publications.

Outcomes:

- Implementation of a function-based approach will increase quality and speed of service to workforce customers as measured by customer satisfaction surveys.
- Support partners for industry sector partnerships will utilize data to redesign courses, implement new offerings, and identify gaps/overlaps to address collectively.
- Create a distribution list of key stakeholders to receive quarterly labor market updates.

Update:

The function-based approach to service delivery is now fully functional. While some of the team names have changed and some of the tasks have been realigned, the model essentially functions as described above. In addition, the industry sector partnerships described above are ongoing. A more complete update of that activity is provided in section 4.1.1.

The Board continues to provide labor market information to key stakeholders, and has expanded this function since the submission of this plan. The Board's Business Development Consultant (BDC) provides labor market information to the economic development directors and chambers of commerce in this area in the form of annual Economic Overview Reports. Those entities also periodically request information such as: demographic reports, occupational information, labor availability, wage information, and commute information for labor in their areas. Much of this information is utilized by these entities in developing their respective plans or in the recruitment and expansion of businesses. The Board's BDC also provides information upon request to companies that have either relocated or that are considering relocation to this area, such as the availability of labor, potential growth, and wages.

In addition to business and economic development entities, the Board also provides labor market information to area school districts. The Board has collaborated with area secondary schools and training providers for many years, but has increased its support of those entities due to the requirements of the 60x30TX higher education plan and the governor's Tri-Agency Initiative. The Board's Career Consultant conducts presentations to middle school teachers, CTE teachers, CTE directors, and school counselors that include exposure to labor market tools and resources in order for them to convey that information to students. The Board is currently exploring the development of a webpage on its website that would connect ISD staff, students, and parents to LMI resources in addition to other career education resources. It would potentially serve as a repository where stakeholders could locate the myriad of tools and resources that are produced by various state agencies (such as TEA, TWC & THECB).

Finally, one of the responsibilities of the Board's new Student Hireability Navigator is to promote the use of career exploration, postsecondary education planning, and work readiness tools available through TWC's Labor Market and Career Information (LMCI) Department. To this end, the Navigator utilizes LMCI information and resources in presentations to area school districts and encourages them to access the website. The Navigator also incorporates area employment statistics on the unemployment and under-employment of students with a disability in group presentations to parents and employers.

Part 2—Identifying Industries of Significance to the Regional Economy

Texas has continued to exhibit economic success over the past decade, and local Workforce Boards have contributed to regional economic success through the establishment of industry sector or cluster strategies in partnership with employers. These strategies help to drive job creation and stimulate economic growth by providing job candidates with the skills and knowledge that employers require to be competitive. Texas' targeted industry cluster initiative supported this work. WIOA continues that support by encouraging sector partnerships and strategies to ensure that the skills of the workforce meet the needs of local industries. The questions below focus on industry clusters and sectors within the region.

4.2.1 Top Three Industry Clusters/Sectors

Identify the three key industry clusters or sectors within your local workforce development area and provide an explanation as to why those clusters or sectors are important to your region and the regional economy. Please indicate for each whether it is an industry cluster or sector.

The three key industry sectors for West Central are identified at the 2-digit NAICS level as healthcare (62), manufacturing (31), and construction (23). The impact of those sectors on this region is explained below.

With over 22,000 employees, the healthcare and social assistance industry employs 16% of the workers (the single largest share of any sector) in this region. According to Chmura, it is expected to be the fastest growing sector in West Central over the next 10 years, with a 1.8% year-over-year rate of growth. In addition to perpetual industry shortages of LVNs, RNs, CNAs, and Medical Assistants, the city of Abilene's ongoing plans to target this sector for expansion will continue to intensify the need for workers the need for healthcare workers. In the last 10 years Abilene has secured three Texas Tech University schools—pharmacy, nursing, and public health. Abilene has also seen the opening of numerous other medical-related facilities, including several expansions within Hendrick Health System. Hendrick has continued plans for further growth, including opening an outpatient surgery center in Brownwood in 2017. In its strategic plan issued March, 2016, the Development Corporation of Abilene stated continued interest in expanding this industry.

In 2014, the MSA was home to 1,386 healthcare establishments. Healthcare & social assistance (NAICS 62) accounted for 13.2% of the area's industry employment, which is the largest percentage among all industry sectors and higher than the U.S. percentage (12.4%). Healthcare employment is projected to expand over the next five years by 10% in the MSA and 17% in the labor shed.

The growing cluster of healthcare employers and education institutions, including the investments of Texas Tech Health Sciences Center, in the Pine Street Corridor presents an opportunity to brand and promote a health and education district in the city.

Per Chmura, the manufacturing sector employs 6.6% of the region's workers, making it the 6th largest sector. In addition, it is vital to the economies of Stephens and Brown counties. The three largest non-governmental employers in the entire region are manufacturing facilities located in Brown County, which employ a combined 2300+ workers; the manufacturing sector as a whole employs 16% of the county's workers and has a location quotient of 1.95. The manufacturing facilities in Stephens County employ 17% of that area's workforce, with a location quotient of 2.05. While manufacturing employs a smaller share of the labor market in Taylor County, at least two large companies are experiencing significant expansions and a major new facility is being established in Abilene. In December 2016 the Coca-Cola plant completed a \$31.9 million expansion that will allow the facility to produce bottles and add a stand-alone can production line that increases the plant's output capacity. The CEO of the Development Corporation of Abilene stated that two to four indirect jobs are created as a result of each direct manufacturing job at Coca-Cola. Another plant expansion is currently underway for Broadwind Towers, which manufactures wind turbine towers. The company produces 150 tower poles annually, and the \$7.2 million expansion will help the company to double that. Finally, a new manufacturing plant, Prairie Dog Pet Products, is opening their fourth and largest manufacturing facility in February 2017 in Abilene. Hiring for the facility began in January 2017 with the hiring of approximately 200 workers and the addition of 50 more monthly until an eventual target of 500+ is reached.

With a regional location quotient of 1.21, the construction sector is projected to have growth of 1% annually over the next ten years. This is supported by the Associated General Contractors of America, which published labor market information in September showing the Abilene MSA increased construction employment by 6% from July 2015 to July 2016. In addition to the construction of new medical, retail, entertainment, and hospitality venues, which occurs regularly in West Central, information obtained from the Texas Department of Transportation website at <http://www.dot.state.tx.us/insdtdot/orgchart/cmd/cserve/recap/senate/senate28.htm> lists plans to rebuild at least 14 area roadway bridges, along with numerous other road construction/repair projects. New wind farm construction planned in the Snyder area will create 250-300 construction jobs for that project alone. The Board is also aware of interest in building a new solar farm in the region. Wind and

solar construction projects are anticipated to continue for the next few years due to the extension of the investment and production tax credits that were passed at the federal level in December of 2015.

4.2.2 Top Fifteen Occupations

For each cluster or sector identified in Question 1, identify the top five occupations for which employer-demand exceeds the number of available workforce or education-program graduates or skilled applicants. Provide labor-market-information data, including the number of jobs, wages, education required, and projected growth.

The table below provides the five highest demand occupations for each of the three key industry sectors. The notes below the table discuss the sources of data for each column.

| | Occupation ¹ | # Current Jobs ² | Average Wage ¹ | Education Required ³ | Projected Growth ² | Total Demand ² |
|-------------------|--------------------------------|-----------------------------|---------------------------|-----------------------------------|-------------------------------|---------------------------|
| Healthcare Sector | Registered Nurse | 3138 | \$60,100 | Bachelor's Degree | 438 | 1175 |
| | Nurse Aide | 1852 | \$22,100 | Postsecondary non-degree award | 289 | 710 |
| | Personal Care Aide | 2219 | \$16,700 | No formal educational credential* | 752 | 1017 |
| | Home Health Aide | 1654 | \$20,000 | No formal educational credential* | 689 | 1075 |
| | Licensed Vocational Nurse | 902 | \$39,300 | Postsecondary non-degree award | 159 | 402 |
| Manufacturing | Welders | 481 | \$42,500 | High school diploma or equivalent | 13 | 173 |
| | Machinists | 278 | \$41,800 | High school diploma or equivalent | 13 | 93 |
| | Team Assemblers | 640 | \$25,500 | High school diploma or equivalent | -51 | 95 |
| | Machine Operators | 266 | \$24,100 | High school diploma or equivalent | -15 | 79 |
| | Industrial Machinery Mechanics | 449 | \$49,100 | High school diploma or equivalent | 85 | 210 |
| Construction | Construction Laborers | 1604 | \$29,200 | No formal educational credential | 188 | 603 |
| | Electricians | 797 | \$41,500 | High school diploma or equivalent | 100 | 239 |
| | Carpenters | 968 | \$31,400 | High school diploma or equivalent | 51 | 213 |
| | Plumbers | 456 | \$43,300 | High school diploma or equivalent | 52 | 122 |
| | Operating Engineers | 593 | \$39,000 | High school diploma or equivalent | 49 | 149 |

1—Occupation, Average Wage: A Chmura Industry-Occupation Mix Report was run for each of the 2-digit industry codes for West Central. The occupations were sorted by total demand.

2—Current Jobs, Projected Growth, Total Demand: A Chmura Industry Snapshot Report was run and sorted for the three key industries (based on the 2-digit NAICS code).

3—Education Required: The Occupational Projections Report from Tracer was used for all occupations except the ones with an asterisk (they were not available on that report). The required education information for occupations marked with an asterisk were obtained from Chmura Occupations Reports.

4.2.3 Planned Strategies for Worker Shortages

Identify the planned strategies to address the worker shortages in the occupations identified in Statement 2.

The Board utilizes several strategies to address skills shortages and help employers find the workers they need. The most basic and frequently used approach is to conduct job fairs (to assist multiple employers at a time) and hiring events (for an individual employer with multiple openings). Such events are held several times a month for various businesses. Multiple hiring events are planned specifically for the Prairie Dog Pet Products facility.

When employers have shortages of workers for positions that do not require formal education or training, the Board may use on-the-job training (OJT) or paid work experience (also known as subsidized employment, or “SE”). OJT/SE services have historically been viewed as primarily benefitting the job seeker, however the Board is examining ways these services could also help employers address the gap of workers for entry-level positions. The Board is developing a strategy to work with area social service agencies to help individuals who lack skills or a solid work history to fill entry-level manufacturing positions. The partner entity would help the individual attend a hiring event to apply with the employer, who would take them through the same screening steps. Applicants who might not be hired on the basis of skills, experience, or work history could be given an opportunity for hire through a subsidized position that would allow them to “skill-up” and/or to demonstrate their value during the subsidized placement period. Upon successful completion of that period, the employer would retain the individual as a regular, unsubsidized employee. However, it is not necessary for job seekers to be referred by a social service agency; anyone who is eligible and is determined to be in need may access this service. This strategy is still in the developmental phase, but has a lot of potential to help employers address worker shortages as well as individuals coming out of situations such as domestic violence, incarceration, substance abuse rehabilitation, and homelessness.

Another strategy for filling gaps in positions that require minimal education and some or no job training, is to connect emerging workers with employers and with opportunities to acquire the skills/training needed. The Board uses 3 methods to accomplish this. First, (these methods have been previously mentioned in other sections of this plan) the Board hosts career day events. These are regional events held at the civic center and allow high school students to speak directly with employers from various industries, community college and technical school representatives, and workforce solutions staff. This provides students with a direct opportunity to learn about local industries, available occupations, and the skills/education required for those positions. It also enables students to find out, directly from education providers, the types of training programs that are locally available and the process for application and enrollment. Junior and senior students are also able to participate in mock interviews with professionals from the community. Second, the Board partners with community/technical colleges to promote Skills for Small Business, Self Sufficiency and Skills Development programs available through TWC. The Board also uses funding opportunities such as the High Demand High Job Training Program to fill gaps through collaboration with economic development partners. Third, youth job fairs are held that target entry-level

jobs for students newly entering the job market. Board Business Service staff is working with the subrecipient Employer Services team to transition the youth job fair from a single annual event to multiple, industry-targeted events that occur over the course of the year.

When there are shortages of workers with certifications, specialized skills, or technical training, WIOA training funds can assist eligible individuals to obtain the skills and credentials sought by employers through individual training accounts (ITAs), OJTs, customized training, and other training services. WIOA training services are provided to individuals who, after interview, evaluation or assessment, and case management are determined to be unlikely or unable to obtain or retain employment that leads to self-sufficiency or higher wages from previous employment through career services alone. The customer must be determined to be in need of training services and to possess the skills and qualifications to successfully participate in the selected program. Training obtained through ITAs must be for jobs determined as in-demand by the Board. Other training mechanisms may only be used to meet the needs of employers experiencing worker/skills gaps.

Another strategy to address shortages of skilled or technically trained workers includes the use of WTxEC local area funds and special grants to fund scholarships and short-term training initiatives. Through the WTxEC the Board is providing dual credit and post-secondary STEM scholarship funds to Cisco College, Ranger College, TSTC, and Western Texas College for training that may occur in 30 different programs. The Board also applied for and recently received a National Dislocated Worker Grant (NDWG) to provide reemployment and training services to dislocated workers, above and beyond services available through formula funds. Finally, in order to help current and future regional employers maintain existing jobs and create new ones, the Workforce Solutions of West Central Texas created the “Workforce Investment Fund” or WIF. This fund is specifically designed to help organizations in any of the 19 counties offset the cost of training current and new employees. The WIF serves only incumbent workers employed by businesses with fewer than 100 workers. To date, three grants have been awarded—one to train FAA Airframe and Power Plant Technicians, one to upgrade caregivers to certified nursing assistants, and one for a required one year internship for a licensed funeral home director/embalmer. The Board uses local area designated funds to support this project.